A REGENERATED MODEL OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP
FOR BETHEL AFRICAN METHODIST
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

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The context of this project included the pastor and Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Middletown, Ohio. Bethel needed a process to guide its compliance with Christ's *requirement of discipleship,* and with the goal of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The objectives were to address factors preventing effective response, and to collaboratively regenerate a measurable model. Through self realization and interconnecting *Strategic Planning, Mission, Evangelism, and Christian Education*; Bethel could redirect performance. Qualitative research included two surveys of congregational demographics, membership characterization, and a final survey of awareness, growth, and participation. Applied research captured Organization Development and Christian Discipleship models.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Grateful recognition is extended to Bishop C. Garnett Henning and to all those who served in any way to inspire me to embark upon the work contained within this project and encouraged its progress along the way.

DEDICATION

to

Richard,

. . . My husband and my friend who continues to amaze me daily with such an abundance of generosity, patience, self sacrifice, humor, and encouragement as we serve God together while sharing our lives, and our love. You are my special blessing.

. . . In memory of those whose words of encouragement yet remain to inspire me: Douglas and Gwandine Tanner, William and Anna Washington, Roland and Ethel Tanner, and my Uncle and mentor, The Rev. Dr. James R. Tanner, Sr.

ILLUSTRATIONS

TABLES

The call to discipleship, no matter how or when it is issued to someone, or whether it comes to a person for the first time or as the second or third or hundredth confirmation, is always the summons to take in faith, without which it is impossible, a definite first step. This step, as one that is taken in faith, i.e., faith in Jesus, as an act of obedience to him, is distinguished from every other step that one may take by the fact that in relation to the whole of one's previous life and thinking and judgment it involves an about-turn and therefore a complete break and new beginning. To follow Jesus means to go beyond oneself . . .

—Karl Barth, *The Call To Discipleship*

INTRODUCTION

> Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is
> the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism
> without church discipline, Communion without confession . . .
> Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross,
> grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.
> —Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*

Eerdmans Bible Dictionary defined the word *disciple* from the Greek term *mathētés* meaning "A student or follower . . . adherent to the teachings of a particular teacher or school of thought."[1] This project builds upon this definition an application of what it means to be a *disciple, student, or follower* of Jesus Christ.

When Jesus presented the commission of discipleship as noted at the ending of Matthew 28, he stated it as a directive that offered a potential opportunity. His followers already received the gift of God's grace and mercy. Now, as Christ's disciples, they were to *appreciate* or add value to these gifts through their service to him and others. This grace Christ afforded them was earned by him at a costly price to enable them for higher service. The commission provided a way to avoid cheapening the tremendous sacrifice made by Christ. It sent them to help others find their way to the same throne of mercy and grace that his earliest disciples had already discovered.

Christ did not criticize what they did in the past, but issued a statement of *regenerated* policy of their former experience as God's people. "Go make disciples of all

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[1] Allen C. Myers, ed., *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans,1987), 285.

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nations" is exactly what he said; and that is what he meant by virtue of his authority to expand their territory for this particular work. Theologically and Biblically speaking, the word *regeneration* means "spiritual rebirth or religious revival."[2] This same meaning applies to the project being presented here within its context, and use as a managed change model to address the requirements of the *Great Commission.*

A narrower view of the scope of Christ's command might lead one to believe that the work of the Great Commission is now fulfilled; or that it only pertained to the remaining eleven Apostles. Or, it may suggest that the intended recipients were the lost tribes of Israel. This document claims a broader application to all who believe that Jesus' assignment extends down through all ages of time. It was an order to go forth to expand the ministry, outreach, and evangelism to spread the Gospel to every place on the earth in such a manner that it makes new disciples, and trains them to join this continuing endeavor.

Today, disciple making remains incomplete, and is still the obligation which is incumbent upon the church to fulfill. The church must learn and understand its need for improvement in performance of this great commission of Christ and then place higher value on and improve its efforts in getting discipleship accomplished.

When the original commission of discipleship was given, there was no specific church organized, nor were there denominational differences. There was just a command to go do it. Since that time, the church has become the primary implement that is responsible for disciple making. The church, however, is now a plethora of formal religious traditions that have emerged over eras of practice and doctrinal changes.

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[2] Paul J. Achtemeier, et al. eds., *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1985), 858.

In free parts of the world, Western culture churches are all competing for those already

seeking a church (or those disenchanted with the one they already have).

Alan J. Roxburgh, in *Missional: Joining God in The Neighborhood,* explains it as

follows:

> We find ourselves as Western Christians in a place where we are
> no longer sure of our identity, no longer sure of where we fit into
> the overall scheme of history or the unfolding purposes of God.
> The increasing sense that the mantle of Christian vitality and
> mission has been removed from the West, that the energy of
> Christian meaning and future now lies in the southern hemisphere,
> all of this is creating a different ethos among Christians in the West
> in which we are less and less sure of ourselves and feel less and
> less able to articulate with confidence the nature of our call.[3]

He goes on to place the dilemma within today's context:

> In such a context there is a struggle to articulate what it might
> mean to live the gospel. What starts to emerge is that the
> paradigmatic nature of Matthew 28 in the social, economic, and
> geopolitical framing of the last century and a half may no longer
> have the capacity to frame a Christian imagination in this new
> space. The language house of empire, power, and control with
> which Matthew 28 has been invested is an imaginary that can no
> longer provide us with the resources to understand what Christian
> life and witness might be in this new place.[4]

Therefore, any attempts to be just like first century disciples in practice would be

futile and counterproductive to what Jesus expects from us now. It requires a closer look

into where Jesus is leading his followers based upon the requirement to make disciples

here and right now. The author of this project contends this explains why the verbiage of

the great commission has a universal and timeless application. Christ purposely stated it

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[3] Alan J. Roxburgh, *Missional: Joining God in The Neighborhood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 88.

[4] Ibid.

without enormous detailing. It was Christ's intent for all future followers to develop their own strategies and goals to get it accomplished.

They were to make the investments of time and resources for making discipleship the main emphasis and reason for Christianity. Jesus' only instructions and specifications were to make disciples, baptize them, and train them to obey what he had taught his disciples.

While there is a need for all churches to respond to the cause of discipleship, this project presents a model prepared for the local congregation of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Middletown Ohio. By design, it regenerates the process within this context to readjust focus upon the main goals of discipleship. It does not suggest an elaborate array of programs and activities to catch the attention of church seekers or *shoppers*. Rather, it recommends managed change (an organization development) model that does two specific things. First, it helps the church to evaluate its own characterization based upon realistic and observable performances. Secondly, it provides insight concerning which interventions have a greater likelihood to stimulate discipleship among the congregation so they are better prepared to make other disciples.

Like other North American Churches, Bethel enjoyed for a little over one hundred and fifty years all the freedoms of worship, but had no specific focus upon the task to help others become disciples, nor was there a clear understanding of what it really meant to be disciples themselves. While it was not wrong to maintain traditions, activities, and programs of the church; there was nothing specifically to refocus the view of service towards disciple making as the centerpiece. Nothing definitive brought people to his command to make disciples as the main reason for the church's existence.

As this project model was implemented, it revealed who was available and ready to move with Christ's mandate and requirements of discipleship. It helped the pastor and a team of leaders in the church to collaboratively discover needs for future training and development.

Upon this assessment, an interactive model of *Strategic Planning, Mission, Evangelism and Christian Education* was developed intentionally to raise congregational awareness of the requirements of discipleship and redirect Bethel's focus and performance towards it.

This project includes the recommendation that Bethel's compliance must be as proactive in its approach as the original disciples were; and just as dedicated as the early Methodist and AME church founders were who boldly worked to build the church through response to the call of discipleship. Bethel is charged with this same responsibility to put in place its own strategies, techniques, and actions designed to produce effective results that are measurable.

Chapter one discusses the ministry being supported by definition of the project. It addresses the topical rationale and the connection for why such a project of this nature was conceived for the contextual setting of Bethel AMEC in Middletown Ohio. It presents why this ministry was the focus of the author of this doctoral dissertation, and shares some background information about her life experience and quest for leading the church towards increased response to Christian Discipleship.

Chapter two includes a discussion of state of the art written work, ideas, and review of literature in the categories of Organization Development, and Christian Discipleship Models and Applications; which assisted in the development of the project.

Because of the vast array of brilliance and inspiration offered by these authors, theologians, and practitioners, many of whom learned from each other and believed it was important to share their perspectives in published work, it made this project possible and cogent for such a time as this in the life of Bethel AME Church.

Chapter three covers an in depth discussion of the theoretical and literary basis which undergirds the whole project. Foundational biblical texts were selected from the Old Testament, Joshua 1: 1-5, and New Testament, Matthew 28: 16-20. An historical review of Christian Discipleship is issued from the context of Jesus Christ's Great Commission into eras of Church history. It flows through Methodism and the founding of the AME Church and Bethel, and then establishes the source for why discipleship remains a living legacy. The theological underpinning of discipleship is defined as why the belief in Christ as a key constituent of the Trinitarian formula drives the thrust for disciple making into a practical application of the *Theology of Discipleship*.

This chapter includes established theories and fundamental beliefs supporting Christian Discipleship; and thoroughly expounds upon important biblical, historical, and theological foundations all in support of the significance of the topic. The solidity of this chapter serves as the primary support and basis for the entire project. It provides the reference point for further research throughout the rest of the document. Literary entries from a variety of biblical scholars, theologians, and historians are included to offer engaged dialogue and views pertinent to the subject matter.

Chapter four describes the design, purpose, and functionality of the model developed for the project. Included is discussion of the methodology, measurements taken, and instruments used. It presents how to self analyze the church to give a

definition of its characterization. With a clearer depiction of Bethel, it affords an opportunity to make better choices about which interventions may have greater effectiveness in the development of discipleship. It reveals the work accomplished by the pastor and context team of Bethel who went through a series of strategic planning techniques to help identify problem areas, and to select and recommend what future actions should be made. It was designed to place the priority of focus upon discipleship.

Chapter five reviews what happened in the field experience when using the model at Bethel. It provides the analysis of baseline characterization, intermediate and end period survey data; a report of what happened and the outcomes of the strategic planning sessions. Included is training for the Class Leaders of Bethel who will be supporting the development of the congregation in the future. The mode of delivering training and internal evangelism for the church was readjusted to raise awareness and a sense of urgency about discipleship. Special study guides were prepared to accompany sermons, which were preached to inspire and stimulate the view towards discipleship.

Chapter six afforded the opportunity to summarize all that occurred in the research and development of the project. Included is a reflection upon what was successful and which things need further work or modifications based upon the results. Additional future recommendations and improved design features were presented to help Bethel not only be more accurate in self characterization, but in making a better determination of which activities need adjustments.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

THE MINISTRY OF DISCIPLESHIP

The ministry focus of this project pertains to Christian Discipleship as it is being regenerated within the context of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) in Middletown, Ohio. The occasion for this undertaking was the represented need for the current local congregation and pastor to recognize their potential for making improvements in compliance with Christ's *great commission* to go and make disciples; as well as supporting the discipleship goals of the AME Church.

The implementer of the project assumed that Christian Discipleship consists of two main segments. First, one must *become* a disciple, and secondly, one must be used in the process *to make* disciples. These two segments began with Christ's commission of the early Apostles and disciples and continued with the early work at Antioch where they were first called Christians. Since that time, the organization of the church has been the principle implement used in making disciples for Christ.

Bethel's Past Focus of Ministry

Since it began in 1860, Bethel has striven to add a number of persons to the Kingdom of God. Due to their progress, God has blessed this moderately sized congregation of around two hundred (active and inactive members) with abilities, talents,

and resources to serve the Lord as a local constituent of The African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC), which is a part of the larger Methodist faith tradition and denomination. It is a connectional church comprised of twenty Episcopal[1] Districts throughout the United States, Canada, South America, Caribbean, South Africa, Europe, and India. The World Council of Churches reports that the AMEC claims a worldwide membership of approximately 2,510,000, represented by 7,000 local congregations, and 3,817 pastors.[2]

The Episcopal structure and organization of the AMEC is managed by Bishops who are elected by a majority vote of the General Conference of the entire church. Representation at this conference is made up of a total delegation of approximately 1440 clergy and laypersons from every Episcopal District of the church. This General Conference convenes once every four years.

Throughout their years of active service, Bishops appoint pastors on an annual basis to serve in the congregations within their respective Episcopal Districts. Presiding Elders are then appointed by Bishops to provide midlevel oversight and management for churches and pastors within the smaller context of their Presiding Elder Districts. Presiding Elders in turn meet with each church in their districts on a quarterly basis, and hold District Conferences and Sunday School Conventions throughout the conference year.

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[1] Relating to a Bishop. The Episcopacy is understood as an office not an order. A Bishop is elected by the general church and is considered first among equals (*Primus Inter Pares*) . . . chief pastor. African Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Book of Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church 2008* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2009), 3.

[2] AMEC membership as listed with the World Council of Churches. *Distribution (membership):- USA: 2,120,000, - Africa: 375,000, - Caribbean: 15,000, World Council of Churches. http://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/regions/north-america/united-states-of-america/african-methodist-episcopal-church.html (accessed October 24, 2010).

A new Annual Conference year begins after the closing of the previous one. The Annual Conference is marked by a series of three to five day formal sessions convened by each Bishop. In attendance are the pastors and the lay delegates from the Annual Conference District as well as members of the conference constituent local churches and visitors from other conferences.

Bethel AMEC is located in the South Ohio Annual Conference of the Third Episcopal District. It is ranked as the third church from the top of twenty in the Dayton Presiding Elder District. Being the third ranked church brings with it a level of expectation on the part of the district, conference, and the greater AMEC connection. Churches at the upper tier are expected to function stronger in service, resources, and potential for growth. The measures for success used at the reporting segment of each annual conference specifically pertain to the number of converts, accessions,[3] baptisms, total number of members on the roll, and financial data representing the fulfillment of all connectional, annual conference, and local church obligations.[4]

The dynamics of AMEC polity are not limited to ranking of churches, but also extend to many other facets of church formal and unstated governance. A few other examples of this include the order of election of Bishops, delegates elected to the General Conference, roll calls made for conference meetings, protocol for public recognition, ecumenical relations, and the general usage of Roberts Rules of Order[5] throughout the church. As a result, most members of the AMEC connection become familiar with the

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[3] Converts who have completed their period of probation and new member studies, and are ready to assume full membership in the church.

[4] AMEC, *The Book of Discipline*, 690-694.

[5] Henry M. Robert, III, et al., *Roberts Rules of Order: Newly Revised in Brief* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2004), 1-208.

processes that are considered decent and orderly in the conduct of the AME Church. Pastors who are appointed to serve local congregations are given official authority to lead the local church in spiritual guidance and administration of temporal affairs. Pastors preside or are the ex officio of all boards, organizations, and groups of their local charges.

As a small group of neighbors who began meeting in homes back in 1860, they grew into the congregation of Bethel AMEC located at 1019 Columbia Avenue in Middletown, Ohio. As the church became more prominent, the church built another facility and relocated to 1507 Yankee Road, in 1975. Bethel has remained at an official AMEC membership roster of four hundred and forty two members. The highest average worship attendance, however, reached one hundred and sixty five during the year of 1987. Bethel has declined in attendance and membership over the last twenty five years indicating a need for clear identifiable analysis of its context and potential.

While faithful consistency of many members within the church has preserved its abilities to remain static, hold a solid position within the community, and meet financial obligations, the lack of growth in discipleship has created a culture of primary inward focus. Intervention to stimulate positive response to Christ's great commission was needed.

As this project began, the researcher observed an underutilization of gifts and talents of a majority of those who are active within the church. These individuals had potential to serve at higher levels of service if they were developed, encouraged, and willing. Like the Hebrew scouts who saw *giants* in the land and saw themselves as *grasshoppers,* various Bethel members tended to perceive themselves and the church far less than their God given capabilities for growth inwardly and outwardly.

They would remark "but . . . we're just a small church." They saw less than their

potential for preparing themselves to accept how individually and collectively they could

follow Christ as his dedicated disciples. While growth in membership numbers is not the

primary focus of this project, failure to be engaged in disciple making was identified as

one of the root causes for the lack of substantial growth not only numerically, but also

spiritually as a congregation.

The absence of specific focus on disciple making does not imply that church

members were not committed to service. In fact, the church participated for several years

in a summer feeding program for children, and provided space for an Ohio Benefits

Bank.[6] The members of the community or church rarely accessed these services.

Members saw more success with a well received annual school supply program and a

college scholarship fund set aside for offspring of Bethel church members. On occasion,

used clothing was gathered by some of the members to deliver to the *Clothing Depot* (a

project sponsored by the Job and Family Services organization in the city). Additional

efforts included special Thanksgiving and Christmas mission efforts to assist the needy.

Several individuals do community volunteer work either on their own or with outside

organizations. Participants have rarely shared their experiences with others in the church

or with the pastor.

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[6] "Community and faith-based organizations, social service agencies, food pantries, job training programs, and homeless shelters are among the groups using The Benefit Bank to help people file Federal and State Income Taxes, and apply for publicly sponsored programs like CHIP, Food Stamps, LIHEAP, and more - at one convenient location and at no cost." The Benefit Bank, "The Benefit Bank: Connecting Families To Resources," Solutions for Progress Inc., http://www.thebenefitbank.org/Visitors (accessed August 4, 2011).

These efforts have not been viewed as ministry associated with discipleship. While all of these activities are important, there has been no specific mission or interconnection that clearly associates what is to be (or should be) done regarding disciple making.

Weekly evening church activities included business meetings and choir rehearsals. Midweek Bible study and Sunday Church School attendance averaged about ten percent (approximately eight persons) of those who regularly attend worship. This made it difficult to engage more of the members in deeper study, training, and discussions about the Biblical basis for discipleship. Collaboratively, the pastor, ministerial staff, and director of Christian Education implemented several modifications within the existing model in order to disseminate information about the Bible's requirements for discipleship to the whole congregation.

Before the process began there was an expressed opinion from some of the members that the church (people and properties) should be primarily used for worship, and that less effort should be expended in the community towards evangelism and outreach. Also implied, was that the pastor should primarily serve the congregation rather than spend time attempting to stimulate growth and change beyond present levels of congregational performance. Another expressed opinion was that the pastor should be the one responsible for evangelism and enticing growth in membership. The pastor believed that this resistance to see the need for change could be a contributing factor to some of the plateaus in attendance and performance.

Another contributing factor seemed to be that members were not inviting new people who may be actively looking for a church. Typically, visitors were persons who had family in the church, but already belong to another Middletown area church; or, who

lived out of town and were not likely to join Bethel. Rarely were there visitors at Bethel's worship who were seeking a church home or who did not consider somewhere else their church (if they ever decided to get serious about joining). There were only a few hands raised when the pastor asked during one of the church meetings "Who has actually invited someone to come to church with them recently?" Survey results of a larger sample of the congregation suggested the same behavior.

The purpose for this focus of ministry presented by this project does not suggest that there has not been conversions, baptisms, or full accessions to church membership at Bethel. Modest gains were realized in the membership over the three years reviewed within the scope of this project. Similar gains have routinely been experienced over the last twenty years or so.

The model being proposed is to address the lack of an *intentional* process for disciple making that is managed collaboratively by the church and pastor. This model extends beyond simply waiting for a visitor who happens to decide to attend worship at Bethel and then respond to the invitation to Christian Discipleship after the pastor's sermon. For this reason, the pastor and a context team of Bethel members strategically planned a new approach. This model is based upon the commission of Christ to go make disciples and describes how Christ's commission really should and could be applied to Bethel.

The model had to be designed in consideration of the complexities of modern American life and church practices throughout society that had already set the tone and expectation for behavior. Factors considered included the connectional AME Church as

well as local community expectations and requirements that consumed a great deal of the resources it takes to function as a local church body.

As Randy Frazee explains in *The Connecting Church*:

> The church of the twenty first century must do more than add
> worlds to an already overbooked society; it must design new
> structures that help people simplify their lives and develop more
> meaning, depth, purpose, and community.[7]

Frazee also suggested that: "The 'hard to swallow' premise is that today's church is not a community, but rather a collection of individuals."[8]

Today's churches are also competing with each other for a limited number of people who are already willing to be Christians. Pastors and members tend to want *easier to reach* people who offer less challenge to convert. People are sought who can bring more value to the church. They want people who are already socially responsible, healthy, financially blessed, and come from similar cultures and backgrounds. Often, those churches that offer the most value to their attendees are the ones who can expect the best response. Therefore, it becomes a matter of differentiating the ministry of discipleship and repositioning the target to help those outside of any church to grow in their understanding of why they should be followers of Christ. This approach does not focus on competing with other churches and their ministries, nor does it direct attention to people based upon social location, race, or other conditions. This approach is modeled on Christ's expansion of the commission to the Gentiles, and the effort he deliberately

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[7] Randy Frazee, *The Connecting Church: Beyond Small Groups to Authentic Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 37.

[8] Ibid., 45.

spent selecting those who were willing to follow him because of who he was instead of who they were.

Bethel has not in the past understood the need for focusing upon discipleship. A prominent cause appeared to be due in part, to a culture of inward focus, which blocked vision, awareness, and extension of a Gospel outreach. Bethel is not alone in facing this challenge, nor is the church entirely to blame for the lack of focus upon the process of Discipleship. The problem is not caused by a deliberate attempt to disobey the Lord's command to make disciples, nor is it because the church is patently selfish. They simply did not understand the need to do anything different from what they had done in the past. They expected to remain busy with individual living and being the church, and were contented with a trickle of membership increases along the way. The situation appeared akin to what J. Oswald Sanders wrote in his book *Spiritual Discipleship*.[9] He suggested that:

> Originally 'Christian' and 'Disciple' were interchangeable terms,
> but they cannot be so used today. Many who would wish to be
> classed as Christians are unwilling to comply with Christ's stringent
> conditions of discipleship.[10]

The level of stringency in discipleship that gets ultimately implemented becomes a matter of interpretation. The source of discipleship response and behavior is a biblical mandate and includes practices that have to be carefully and prayerfully assimilated according to resources (human and material) within each context.

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[9] J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Discipleship: Principles of Following Christ for Every Believer* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1994), 28.

[10] Ibid.

The Backdrop of Middletown, Ohio and Bethel

Middletown is located in Southwestern Ohio, and overlaps Butler and Warren

counties. Stephen Vail and James Sutton laid out the original town plot of Middletown in

1802.[11] Among the town's first settlers and founding persons are Ezekiel Ball, Daniel

Doty, Stephen Vail, Garrett Van Vost, Moses Potter, and David Enoch. All, except Enoch

were originally from New Jersey.[12]

According to historical account:

> Probably the first settler in Middletown was Daniel Doty, one of
> the Western pioneers, who died on Monday, the eighth day of May
> 1848, at his residence near Middletown, at the advanced age of
> eighty-three years. Daniel Doty was one of the first settlers of
> Butler County, and among the first pioneers of the Miami country.
> He was born in Essex County, State of New Jersey, on the twenty-
> third day of March 1765.[13]

Middletown was incorporated by the Ohio General Assembly in 1833 and

officially became a city by 1886. Legend maintains that Middletown was given its name

because of its location midway between Dayton and Cincinnati. When the Miami and

Erie Canal was completed and four railroads came into the area, Middletown began to

thrive as a major industrial center. Prominent industries were paper and steel

manufacturers.[14]

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[11] Roger L. Miller and George C. Crout, *The Images of America: Middletown, Ohio* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 1998), 11.

[12] US Gen Project, "Middletown," Ancestry.com, http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ohbutler/cyc/627.htm (accessed April 9, 2012).

[13] Ibid.

[14] Key to the City, "Welcome To Key To The City's Page for Middletown, Ohio," Key To The City, http://www.usacitiesonline.com/ohcountymiddletown.htm#statistics (accessed October 26, 2010).

Middletown's official population estimate as of the April 2012, 2010 US Census[15] was 48,694 people. This shows that since the year 2000 there has been a decrease in population by 5.6 percent due to increasing unemployment and migration of persons away from the city. The female population in 2010 was 52.5 percent. The median age was 36.2 years. The African American community was listed at 5,697 or (11.7 percent) of the total population.[16]

The AK Steel Holding Corporation, founded in 1900, served as a primary employer for all of Butler and Warren county residents until it and other major employers experienced deep cutbacks over the last few years.[17] As a result, employment and earning capacities within the region have been significantly affected. This is particularly true within the African American community.

According to the latest estimates of record, Middletown's median household income was $37,447 (lower than the median household income of $47,358 for all of Ohio). In comparison, the African American median household income in Middletown was even lower at $25,903. The median per capita income for African Americans in the city was $13,345, in contrast to the median per capita income for whites at $22,083. Approximately 15.7 percent of African American households in Middletown earned less

[15] US Census Bureau, "State and County Quick Facts, Middletown, Ohio," US Census Bureau, http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/39/3949840.html (accessed April 2, 2012).

[16] Ibid.

[17] Liz Blume, et.al., "Middletown: A Place Matters Pilot," United Way Study by Xavier University , October 1, 2008.,17, http://xavier.edu/communitybuilding/placematters/Documents/Middletown_Final_Report.pdfIbid. (accessed April 2, 2012).

than $10,000 per year, compared to 9.2 percent of white households represented in these data.[18]

Bethel is located in the lower income district of the African American community at 1507 Yankee Road. It is situated beside the city's former firehouse (circa 1930);[19] now an abandoned building. The church has some interest in procuring this property for expanded outreach to the community once Bethel builds its own process and plans for a more involved membership.

There are approximately twelve other African American churches (Baptist and Pentecostal) in the same vicinity. Several neighborhood churches have similarities in architecture, facilities, and active membership size in comparison to Bethel. While Bethel is the only AME Church in Middletown, there are approximately twenty other AMEC local congregations within ten to thirty miles away in either the Dayton or Cincinnati Districts. As a result, it is quite convenient for members to change church attendance and membership as desired without risking their connection to the community and their families.

Bethel has gifted choirs, ushers, officers and special focused ministries, all of which demonstrate a dedicated approach to worship and preserving the church facilities. *Active* members who attend Bethel regularly (two or more times per month) demonstrate their commitment and dedication at varying individual levels of involvement in the life of the church.

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[18] City of Middletown, "Middletown, Ohio," http://www.city-data.com/city/Middletown-Ohio.html (accessed, April 2, 2012).

[19] City of Middletown, "Fire History," City of Middletown, Ohio, http://www.cityofmiddletown.org/fire/history.html (accessed, April 2, 2012).

Bethel has all of the distinctive identifiers prevalent in African American

Churches. Members are comparable to persons studied in recent research reported in an

article entitled "How the Faith of African-Americans Has Changed" by The Barna

Group. These authors stated:

> Compared to the other three ethnic groups, blacks emerged as the
> most likely to engage in each of five church-related activities in a
> typical week (attending church services, participating in a small
> group, attending a Sunday school class, praying, and reading the
> Bible). They were also the most likely to have made a personal
> commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life and
> to have an "active faith" (i.e., attend church services, pray to God
> and read from the Bible during the week). They also had the lowest
> proportion of unchurched adults and were the ethnic group least
> likely to be Catholic.[20]

More recent research from the Barna Group in 2011, revealed the following trend:

> The most stable group of the three racial/ethnic segments has been
> the blacks. During the past 20 years, they have undergone
> significant change in just two of the 14 religious variables tracked.
>
> - In 1991, 38% of black adults volunteered at a church during the
>   course of a typical week. That figure had fallen to 30% by 2011.
>
> - Twenty years ago nearly nine out of ten black adults (88%)
>   held an orthodox perspective on the nature of God. Today
>   the figure is eleven percentage points lower (77%).[21]

While Bethel fit this distinction, it still struggled to see a real purpose for the

church to share the Gospel with others by reaching out in evangelistic service.

The pastor presented the vision statement of *Disciples Engaged in Christ's*

Service during the beginning of her pastorate at Bethel in November of 2009. The intent

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[20] Barna Group, "How the Faith of African-Americans Has Changed," The Barna Group, Ltd. http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/13-culture/286-how-the-faith-of-african-americans-has-changed?q=black (accessed October 29, 2010).

[21] Barna Group, "Major Faith Shifts Evident Among Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics Since 1991," The Barna Group, Ltd., http://www.barna.org/faith-spirituality/510-major-faith-shifts-evident-among-whites-blacks-and-hispanics-since-1991 (accessed August 2, 2011).

was to stimulate the focus of the Church towards the real cause of Christ to *become and to make disciples.* Since then, she has deliberately expanded and initiated involvement by increasing the numbers of members who are assigned work in the church. Members have been asked to assume new assignments and appointments, and to take on new or additional tasks and duties. It was a technique used to obligate them collectively and individually to build the church into a total collaborative body of Christ.

Initially, she was met with the typical group dynamic issues that happen when roles and people change within an organization. This dynamic exists whenever people are appointed or elected to serve in new roles. A text prepared by Gareth Jones and Jennifer George, refers to B.W. Tuckman and M.C. Jenson's long standing research that identified five stages of group development.[22] In the first stage of *forming*, members get to know each other, and determine what they want to accomplish together.[23] The second stage is *storming.*[24] In that stage, members experience conflict and attempt to determine who is in control. In the third stage of *norming,*[25] the group develops interrelationships, establishes consensus for goals, and identifies acceptable behaviors for the group. The fourth stage follows with *performing*[26] to get actual work accomplished. If there is a lack of appropriate motivation or an incorrect balance of autonomy and direction provided by leadership prior to entering this stage, real difficulties are created that prevent or stifle

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[22] B.W. Tuckman and M.C. Jenson, "Stages of Small Group Development," *Group and Organizational Studies*, 2 (1977): 419-427, quoted by Gareth R. Jones and Jennifer M. George, in *Contemporary Management*, 4th ed. (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2006), 546.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

goal attainment. For most organizations, this is the final stage of development. Ad hoc groups could also experience a fifth stage of *adjourning*,[27] which ends when the work is done.

Using this explanation of group dynamics, the Pastor began to determine how she and the church would transition themselves along the continuum towards *performing*, as the Lord would expect of them. It was apparent that the *storming* stage started within a few weeks after her arrival when changes were presented. The church had a new pastor, elections of officers were taking place, and new leaders were emerging to demonstrate their abilities.

Just as AME pastors receive their appointments on an annual basis, Stewards are appointed and confirmed, and Trustees are elected to serve on an annual basis. This does not mean; however, that both the pastor and officers cannot serve (and often do) in their positions for many years through annual appointments and elections.

This potential for annual change in leadership requires important strategies for equipping the local church to manage continuity. The advantage to having the potential for change in leadership is that it affords the opportunity to faithfully build church and organizational effectiveness *into processes* rather than being contingent upon whichever individual pastor or officer may be in charge in the future. This necessitates emphasis on the need for the church to develop inward strength and commitment to the connectional goals of the AME Church as well as keeping Christ the true head of the church.

This project was developed during the pastor's first three years of appointment to Bethel. She was led to immediately begin a process of developing people, reiterating the cause for discipleship, enlarging the number of overall participants in the ministries and

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[27] Ibid.

activities of the church, and challenging the congregation about the need for growth and spiritual maturity as they prepared themselves to become Disciples of Christ.

While this was not the full process model that was expected to undergird the vision or goal of Discipleship, it was a necessary preliminary action to assure persons would actually get involved and become available. Thus their skills and spiritual gifts and graces would be revealed, and their potential value as participants in the shaping of Bethel's discipleship would be seen. Therefore, this project was timely; occurring at the best point for transitioning into the development and implementation of a regenerated model. The church and their new pastor could engage in collaborative efforts and grow together.

The Author and the Ministry of Discipleship

The author of this project, Melonie Ann Valentine, is the Senior Pastor of Bethel. She received her appointment in November of 2009 by Bishop Cornal Garnett Henning, Sr., the former Presiding Prelate of the Third Episcopal District of the AME Church. She previously served as pastor of Quinn Chapel AME Church in Ironton, Ohio, St. Paul AME Church in Circleville, Ohio and Bethel AME Church in Frankfort, Ohio. She also served as Associate Pastor at Quinn Chapel AME Church in Chillicothe, Ohio (totaling approximately twenty years in pastoral ministry).

Melonie Ann Valentine was born March 16, 1948 as the middle child of three, and only daughter of Douglas and Gwandine (Washington) Tanner of Portsmouth, Ohio; where both families of Washington and Tanner settled and lived for many years. She grew up attending Booker T. Washington Elementary School, and graduated from

Portsmouth High School, as did most of her family and friends. All were part of the African American community referred to as *The North End* of town. Bannon Park and the 14th Street Community Center served as the recreation centers for *The North End*. There were six African American churches all located so that parishioners could walk to their respective corners for Sunday worship in the morning and share songfests with each other during afternoon and evening services.

Melonie's parents, two brothers, Maurice and Marlan, and she were members of Allen Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, where she was baptized, took her vows of full membership at the age of eleven, and served actively throughout her formative and young adult years. Melonie recognized her call to preach when she was about eight years old, and grew up knowing its certainty; yet she spent many years as an adult building a career in business and caring for a family before entering pastoral ministry.

Melonie began teaching Sunday school at age thirteen and delivered her first message from the pulpit at Allen Chapel during a midweek prayer service when she was seventeen. The message was entitled: *God Never Moves Away; We Do*. It was based upon the King James translation of the text from The Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 28, verse 20: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."[28]

She has both a Bachelor's and Master's Degree in Business from Ohio University in Athens, Ohio. She also holds a Masters in Divinity from Payne Theological Seminary in Wilberforce, Ohio. Melonie has more than thirty years of combined professional experience in Management, Organization Development, Human Resources and Staffing,

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[28] Matt. 28:20 (King James Version).

Customer Service, Strategic Planning, Team Building, and Business Process Re-engineering through her former employment at The Piketon Uranium Enrichment Plant now managed by the United States Enrichment Corporation (USEC) in Piketon, Ohio. She believes that these experiences provided some transferrable skills to her pastoral work with the church, particularly with group development, process modeling, and understanding how to evaluate and lead group potential for success to meet mutual goals.

Her husband Richard E. Valentine and she are residents of Chillicothe, Ohio. She and Richard have one daughter, Courtney. She has one stepdaughter, Tracie (Valentine) Burgess, a stepson, Matthew, and three step grandsons Kendall Brooks, Jr., Matthew Jr., and Aaron Valentine.

Melonie was first licensed to preach in 1985, and shortly after, was appointed to supply her first church, Bethel AMEC in Frankfort, Ohio. She left this assignment after three years to address increased family obligations, and complete educational and career goals. Additionally, she had grown disenchanted and confused by the sexist views she encountered and the lack of observable progress of female ministers within the church (of any tradition). God's faithfulness to continue the call upon her life remained constant through the years during her time of struggle about her call to ministry. Through guidance from the Holy Spirit, she returned some twelve years later to faithfully respond to her calling from God. She returned with a renewed resolve to become more engaged in Christ's service regardless of the circumstances.

She was licensed again to preach in 1998, in Chillicothe, Ohio where she became an associate minister at Quinn Chapel AMEC. She was ordained as an Itinerant Deacon,

in 2001, entered seminary, and retired that summer from the corporate world to fully respond to pastoral ministry. She was ordained to the office of Itinerant Elder in 2004.

This background informs her current connection with Bethel AMEC. She believes that she and the church are required to direct the crux of their ministry focus upon following Christ and helping others to also reach the goals Jesus set out before all . . . to go and make disciples. With this in mind, the author and members of Bethel collaboratively addressed how discipleship could and would become a part of their culture and actions in response to this *great commission*. Together they strategically planned how to elevate congregational awareness and understanding of what discipleship is; and why it should be done within their own context.

The first foundational assumption for this project was that Jesus Christ must be the object for faith if the church is to consider itself a Christian disciple making entity. This meant that Bethel *should have* its own vision, mission, purpose, and goals of Christian discipleship that reflect its AME connection as well as its commitment to follow Jesus Christ. Secondly, it was given that the church should be working towards this end by means of a *process* for assuring and measuring its results. Therefore, a review of the church's history, current environment, socioeconomic status, internal influences, self perceptions, and community presence formed the baseline for beginning a study to determine the best process or model of discipleship that should be proposed.

The same portion of biblical text that informed the author's first sermon as a teenager was used to frame the foundational research for the dissertation project presented in this work.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY PROJECT

> To become a disciple means a decisive and irrevocable turning to
> both God and neighbor. What follows from there is a journey
> which, in fact, never ends in this life, a journey of continually
> discovering new dimensions of loving God and neighbor, as the
> "reign of God and his justice . . . are increasingly revealed in the
> life of the disciple."
> —David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*

Two major categories of state of the art literature were considered relevant and

important in formulating the regenerated model of Christian Discipleship for Bethel.

These areas included 1) Organization Development (OD), and 2) Christian Discipleship

Models and Applications. The review of Organization Development (OD) provided

understanding of how people and organizations can collaboratively develop, grow, and

manage the change necessary to achieve greater effectiveness. In order to design a

construct, or regenerated model of Christian Discipleship; strategic planning, self

evaluation and analysis, and process modeling were used collaboratively within the

context to manage and implement changes in support of the model being proposed.

The author of this project is an OD Specialist who has prior professional

experience in internal consulting for groups within a business and industrial setting. This

background provided some transferrable application to the pastoral collaborative work

within the congregation of Bethel as it pertained to this specific project.

Since Christian Discipleship is being treated herein as a vision of an overarching objective in compliance with Christ's great commission, applied research written about the breadth of Christian Discipleship was reviewed to inform the researcher about state of the art in discipleship practices. The model developed was based on consideration of the recommendations that emerged from this literature review. This model includes *Mission, Evangelism, and Christian Education* because these have been shown to be the primary elements that support the whole process of Christian Discipleship. Having identified these primary elements, texts relevant to church or congregational development in these areas of specialty were reviewed for their relevancy to the scope of the project.

Organization Development (OD)

Study in the field of Organization Development has revealed much about the nature and behaviors of human beings in their interactions with each other in support of managing change and effectiveness. The secular world has applied Organization Development at varying levels by implementing many actions and techniques, all falling under the broad category of OD, to bring about necessary change and improvements. Results have varied according to many different factors at respective levels of success. In no way should the discussion presented here be considered an exhaustive review of every OD theory or model. Furthermore, the literature described does not represent a recommendation that the church should follow the path of secularity to improve its performance in Christian Discipleship. Instead, what is being presented considers how the study of the intentional management of change and models for effectiveness can benefit any organization of people regardless of what the specific goals are.

In truth, much of what can be understood about the kind of *change agent* Jesus was within his context can be readily identified as Organization Development. He designed a regenerated system that transformed people to carry out the will of God by means of teamwork, collaboration, and enthusiasm among the early disciples who followed him.

There have been many technical definitions applied to the concept of Organization Development which itself falls under the broader realm of Behavioral Science. For the sake of clarity, Richard Beckhard helped form the following common definition which has not significantly varied in concept since the late nineteen sixties:

> Organization development is an effort (1) planned, (2) organization wide, and (3) managed from the top, to (4) increase organizational effectiveness and health through (5) planned interventions in the organization's "processes," using behavioral science knowledge.[1]

An expanded and updated definition is provided by Gary McLean in *Organization Development: Principles, Processes, and Performance*:

> *Organization development* is any process or activity, based on the behavioral sciences, which, either initially or over the long term, has the potential to develop in an organizational setting enhanced knowledge, expertise, productivity, satisfaction, income, interpersonal relationships, and other desired outcomes, whether for personal or group/team gain, or for the benefit of an organization, community, nation, region, or, ultimately, the whole of humanity.[2]

The word *regeneration*, as it was considered for Bethel's discipleship model, refers to managing change and revitalization from how things were (and are) done toward

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[1] Richard Beckhard, *Organization Development: Strategies and Models* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1969), 9.

[2] Gary N. McLean, *Organization Development: Principles, Processes, and Performance* (San Francisco, CA: Berett-Kohler Publishers, 2006), 9.

how God expects discipleship to really be addressed. This discipleship model is clearly, by definition, an OD process.

Thus, the project proposed does not recommend total replacement of everything pertaining to how the church functions. In fact, Jesus himself did not begin by starting over. Instead, he began within the context of the Jewish community by regenerating the model of what the community should become. His regenerated model was based upon his teachings and fulfillment of ancient prophecies about himself. He regenerated the model for his first disciples by first going to the Israelites *only*, and then extending his call to all people in every location.

Christ commissioned his earliest disciples from Galilee to go make disciples. This commission formed the basis for development of an organization of followers who then had to strategically plan their next steps and work through all of the human dynamics involved to bring their plans into action. They received training and development from Jesus Christ over the three years of his earthly ministry. Jesus' instruction built upon what they already knew as practicing Jews. They were sent forward, according to his direction, to regenerate a new strategy based upon the vision he had already provided by Messianic authority. The covenantal typology of God's will, God's promise, and God's way remained constant conditions in all circumstances even though situations, people, orders, improvements, strategies, goals, and specific contextual details varied from situation to situation. It is this same regenerative quality of measures that are prescribed by the model presented for Bethel going forward in making disciples.

After the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, the early Christians figured out, along with the leading of the Holy Spirit, what and which practices and policies required modification, elimination, and enhancement. This had to be done in view of where God was leading them into the world. It was their responsibility as followers of Christ to assure compliance with the Lord's expectations. Total transformation into what the Christian Church has become happened over ages of time as a result of a managed change that claimed its basis upon the framework of Christ's original model and brief instructions to *go make disciples, baptizing . . . and teaching obedience to his commands*. How well or effective this change occurred was a matter of who was interpreting the command, and how it was interpreted. Regardless of the persons involved, it was always a process of managed change.

Donald Anderson, in *Organizational Development: The Process of Leading Organizational Change,* noted that: "a key value in organization development is the creation of healthy environments that promote collaboration rather than competition, with the assumption that a win-win solution is both possible and more desirable."[3] Therefore, when change is recommended or promoted within the church, it is important that the treatment of change (similarly to any other organization) includes shared ideas pertaining to research, responsibilities, and resolutions based upon what is best in view of the objective to follow Christ.

Furthermore, it is vital to recognize that resistance will occur. Peter Block in *Flawless Consulting: A Guide to Getting Your Expertise Used*, maintained that there are a plethora of reasons for resistance to change. These include issues of control,

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[3] Donald L. Anderson, *Organization Development: The Process of Leading Organizational Change*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing, 2012), 44.

vulnerability, fear, etc.[4] Therefore, as a pastor, and the author of this project believed, it was important to draw from the concept of Block's[5] explanation as a way to avoid time consuming conflicts which could delay or curtail much needed improvements.

David L. Cooperrider and Leslie E. Sekerka, explained in an article, *Toward a Theory of Positive Organizational Change*, that: "The model of positive organizational change involves three stages, moving from elevation of inquiry, to fusion of strengths, to activation of energy."[6]
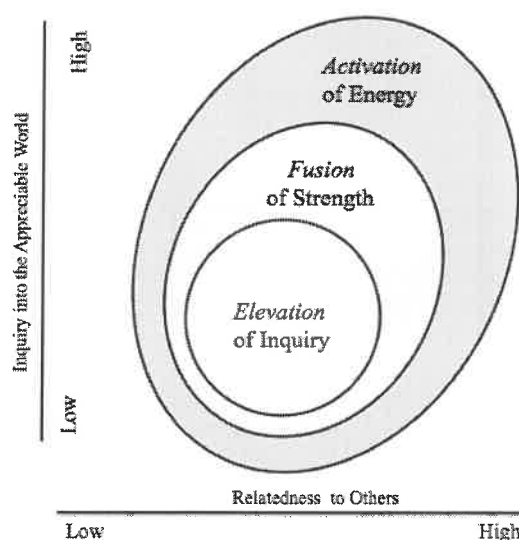
Figure 1. Reprinted with permission of the publisher. From D. Cooperrider and L.E. Sekerka, copyright©, 2003. "Elevation of Inquiry into the Appreciable World: Toward a Theory of Positive Organizational Change."225-240. In *Positive Organizational Scholarship*. Edited by K. Cameron, J. Dutton, and R. Quinn. (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2003), 235.

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[4] Peter Block, *Flawless Consulting: A Guide to Getting Your Expertise Used,* 2nd ed. (San Francisco, CA: Pfeiffer, 2000), 139-171.

[5] Ibid., 161-171.

[6] David L. Cooperrider and Leslie E. Sekerka, "Toward a Theory of Positive Organizational Change," in *Organization Development*, ed. Joan V. Gallos (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 231.

Cooperrider and Sekerka's model of positive change indicates that along the vertical axis is inquiry into the *appreciable world* involving reflection upon what is good about the past, present, and individuals. They state: "If elevation is associated with future positive action, it holds great potential to favorably impact organizational communities."[7] It then becomes a matter of inquiry into the positive that elevates what is best in an organization.   For the church (such as Bethel) it pertains to stressing or emphasizing what is best. God of course, is elevated as *the best* resource for strength based upon what is already known through experiencing God in the life of Bethel. In addition, the talents of people, resources, progress which has been made, and counting blessings all serve as an *inquiry into the appreciable world.*[8] The more inquiry into appreciation that is made, the more likely the church membership and pastor will move or change into a positive direction.

Along the horizontal axis of this model, is *Relatedness to Others*. According to Cooperrider and Sekerka's model, relatedness indicates that positive change involves interconnection of people, groups, and cultures to move towards a fusion of strengths that energizes the whole effort.[9] This relatedness to others, as it pertains to Bethel, would include stressing the need to value the assets that others bring within the internal and external interconnection of members, families, community, AME Church, society, and culture. Another word that could be considered is *synergy*. Synergy is the greater creative combined efforts that emerge as interconnection is developed. This results in greater potential for growth, achievement; and to capture opportunities for development in

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[7] Ibid., 232.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

identifying and solving problems (while at the same time lessening the potential for negativity).

As William Rothwell, and Roland Sullivan wrote in *Practicing Organization Development: A Guide for Consultants*, point out: "OD is long-range in perspective. It is not a quick 'fix' strategy for solving short term performance issues . . ."[10] Therefore, applying elements of organizational change to regenerate a model of Christian Discipleship will require long term commitment and ongoing motivation for change.

Additionally, how well people and organizations are led and motivated to change has major underlying effect on outcomes. The late psychologist, Abraham Maslow developed a model of how people respond to motivation based upon their needs. Maslow's work remains today, still unchallenged in its fundamental precepts. Most interpretations of Christian ideology, of course, recommend the intervention of faith, Christ, and religion as means to overcome or fulfill the needs attributed to living in the flesh, and as the means for motivating the correct behavior for spiritual maturity. Nevertheless, in the discussion of the Christian concept of motivation and intervention, it is useful to understand Maslow's theory from the perspective of a behaviorist. This is important so that the manifesting of human need can be understood as a powerful force to reckon with (pertaining to motivation).

As Christians, the easier way to explain motivation of behavior is to say "the devil made me do it" or "the Holy Spirit led me to it." If, however, the conversation gets expanded to personal accountability and responsibility as Jesus expects from

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[10] William Rothwell and Roland Sullivan, "Organization Development," in *Practicing Organization Development: A Guide for Consultants,* 2nd ed., eds. Kris Quaid, Roland Sullivan and William J. Rothwell (San Francisco, CA: Phieffer, 2005), 19.

commissioned followers, then it helps to bring into dialogue how and why people respond to motivation from the perspective of the human psyche and physiology.

Maslow's pyramid of human needs model depicts a hierarchy of how people are motivated first by the lower or basic needs for survival, followed by the needs for safety, then by social needs. When those needs are addressed, human beings are interested in satisfaction of self esteem and self actualization.[11]
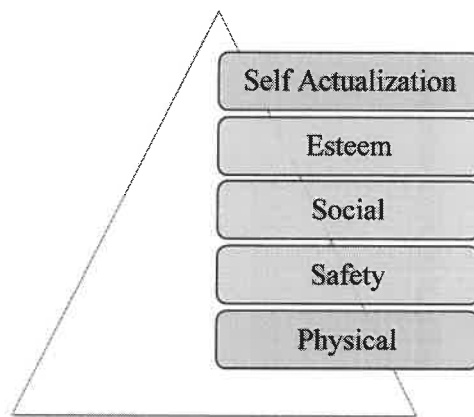
Figure 2. Adapted from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Model. David C. McClelland, *Human Motivation* (Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman, 1985) quoted by Gareth R. Jones and Jennifer M. George, *Contemporary Management*, 4th ed. (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2006), 467.

These higher value needs (esteem and self-actualization) were those that Jesus obviously appealed to when calling his disciples to follow him and then sending them to make other disciples. Several of the Apostles were poor fishermen, unemployed laborers, or social outcasts (such as tax collectors). Abject poverty was rampant throughout Judea in those days, accompanied by oppressive conditions imposed by both the Government and religion of all kinds (Jewish and Pagan). These conditions left people struggling to fulfill

[11] David C. McClelland, *Human Motivation* (Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman, 1985) quoted by Gareth R. Jones and Jennifer M. George, *Contemporary Management*, 4th ed. (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2006), 467.

the most basic needs for food, water, and shelter without the security of home, relationships, family, and friends.

Jesus offered first a fulfillment of those basic needs to his called Apostles, other disciples, and the poor who followed him. As he forgave their sins and led them to understand who he was and how much they meant to him, their needs for social engagement, self esteem, and actualization were met through the support of being a part of the team or group that considered Jesus to be their master and Lord; and the Son of God who was God. Inherent in the disciple making process was a satisfaction of human needs (*relative to their context*).

The early church from its inception formed a community of believers who shared resources and mutual support in order to assist the disciple making process as it progressed. Jesus stressed the teaching and value of love amongst his disciples as a defining characteristic for others to see. This meant that Christ did not neglect fulfilling basic human needs in accordance to the creation of humanity. He addressed those needs while pulling their response upward to him from the perspective of their own self esteem and sense of accomplishment as they followed him and performed according to their gifts and talents.

This is an important factor in consideration of how a model for discipleship must be developed within context. Primary needs of the disciple must be considered to enable and motivate them to serve and move to fulfill higher level needs. It is also important to grasp that accomplishment or fulfillment of discipleship only occurred when the disciples were acting from higher self-actualization. It was having faith in God that could motivate them to that higher level.

Psychologist, David McClelland did extensive research, which revealed that people have needs for achievement, affiliation, and power.[12] Being a disciple or follower of Jesus fulfills levels of social, personal worth (esteem), and self actualization needs. Following Jesus provides an interaction of the person with goals that can have powerful effects upon the lives of other people. There are opportunities to reach for achievement through teamwork and collaboration that provide a sense of accomplishment.

Pastors must clearly understand the need to invest time in motivating people to achieve the goal of becoming disciples who make other disciples. This requires an understanding of how to motivate people and where people are in their own status of need fulfillment. If they are hungry, sick, scared, tired, abused, socially challenged or stifled, the motivation offered them has to help address these needs.

Development or regeneration requires that pastors and organizational leaders know how to manage: 1) complacency and 2) resistance as the organization embarks upon any change for the better. This is especially so in churches and nonprofit organizations where the greater majority of people volunteer service and donate money and time.

John P. Kotter suggests that invoking genuine urgency can be an important motivator in overcoming complacency. In *A Sense of Urgency,* he provided insight concerning how the complacent behave.

> The best way to identify the complacent is by what they do instead
> of what they say (though words can be revealing). The complacent
> do not alertly look for new opportunities or hazards facing their
> organizations. They pay much more attention to what is happening
> internally than externally. They tend to move at thirty miles an
> hour even when fifty is clearly needed to succeed. They rarely

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[12] Ibid.

initiate or truly lead. Most of all, they do what has worked for them in the past.[13]

Kotter explained that: "When you don't see opportunities or hazards, your sense of urgency drops. With less urgency, you are even less inclined to look outside for the new possibilities and problems."[14] This suggests that a regenerated Christian Discipleship model must create urgency. Such urgency is consistent with both social science research and with the actions of Jesus. Upon his resurrection, Jesus invoked a great sense of urgency when he appeared to his followers before his ascension to Heaven to give them their work assignment. He explained his authority and emphasized the significance and urgency for the mission he was sending them on.

In order to invoke a sense of urgency using a positive model of organizational change that addresses the psychological and social needs of the people, it requires a strategic process. William Rothwell and Roland Sullivan note that "in many organizations, OD is coupled with strategic business planning, a natural fit because both can be long-range in scope."[15]

Jeffrey and Linda Russell in *Strategic Planning Training* define strategic planning as "creating a strategy for achieving the organization's goals and then devising an organized method to accomplish this strategy."[16]

As Johan Nelis and John Jeston in *Business Process Management, Practical Guidelines to Successful Implementations* state: "Process architecture is much more than

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[13] John P. Kotter, *A Sense of Urgency* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press, 2008), 22.

[14] Ibid., 65.

[15] Rothwell and Sullivan, *Practicing Organization Development,* 19.

[16] Jeffrey Russell and Linda Russell, *Strategic Planning Training* (Alexandria VA: ASTD Press, 2005), 10.

a process model; it also includes the objectives, principles, strategies and guidelines that are the foundation of the models."[17] This understanding of process architecture has practical application for any attempt to model a process for organizational development, and suggests that unless the architecture is in place (and used) the model has less opportunity to be effective.

A process is simply defined as how work gets done. It is a series of activities or tasks that are performed consecutively or interactively to produce defined results. Typically, a process has inputs that are transformed into outputs and outcomes. With this simple definition of a process comes the concept of modeling and managing the process (or processes) based upon desired outcomes.

Process Modeling is an approach used by some businesses to reprocess or reengineer operations and organizations when they are interested in improving, gaining market share, reducing costs, or becoming more effective and efficient in how they function. While techniques are used to modify work routines, shop lay outs, or to reorganize; the strategy for improvement in actual model design could encompass many details of varying degrees of importance to the company or business depending upon what its vision, mission, and goals are. The approach may begin with modeling the as-is process or as Alec Sharp and Patrick McDermott stated in *Workflow Modeling: Tools for Process Improvement and Application Development*, "Characterizing the To-Be Process." [18] They included two basic steps of 1) producing important characteristics of the to-be

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[17] Johan Nelis and John Jeston, *Business Process Management: Practical Guidelines to Successful Implementations* (Burlington, MA: Elsevier Ltd., 2008), 27.

[18] Alec Sharp and Patrick McDermott, *Workflow Modeling: Tools for Process Improvement and Application Development* (Norwood, MA: Artech House Inc., 2001), 246.

process, and 2) developing swim lane diagrams to depict workflow at increasing levels of detail.[19] The next step of diagramming the process means selecting how it can be accomplished through strategies, plans, and actions and developing an ideal to-be workflow based upon context.[20]

Obviously Jesus Christ expected his followers to leave the mountain in Galilee after his commission of them with their need to strategically plan the rest of the details and actions. Therefore, the commissioning of disciples by Jesus provides a foundational example that inspires development of a regenerated model for discipleship. Applying the research underlying OD, the context team and pastor at Bethel AMEC Middletown engaged in a process to produce a regenerated model of Christian Discipleship.

Discipleship Models: Development and Application

There are many resources, workshops, and programs all written or designed to address how churches and individuals should go about the process of discipleship. The intent of this review was not to suggest that the model for Bethel should incorporate every five, six, or twelve step process written about the subject of discipleship; but to determine best practices and theories for consideration within the context of Bethel.

One way of starting the discussion was to review a book written by Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger entitled *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples*. The whole premise of the book stresses the issue that churches have become far too encumbered to be effective in compliance with God's process of disciple making.

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., 266.

One of the most important points made was:"Step 1: Design a Simple Process (Clarity)."[21] Then, they proceed to explain how getting to simple is a process of change over time that is not always easy.[22]

William R. Hoyt's *Effectiveness By The Numbers: Counting What Counts in The Church,*[23] provided a process for evaluating worship attendance in today's environment and other features of church health. George Barna's research in *Futurecast* was a general resource pertaining to observations of faith and practice.[24] One disciple making source reviewed was *Transforming Discipleship* by Greg Ogden.[25] Ogden's work was consulted for theories about the practice of smaller group development in discipleship.

A radical challenge for development was presented by mega church pastor, David Platt who recommends in *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream,* a full year of personal commitment by "praying for the entire world, reading through the entire word, sacrificing your money for a specific purpose, spending time in another context, and committing your life to a multiplying community."[26]

Platt contends that many Americans misunderstand the real purpose of Jesus' commission to go and make disciples. He suggests that the pursuit of material goals

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[21] Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2011), 236 -238.

[22] Ibid.

[23] William R. Hoyt, *Effectiveness By The Numbers: Counting What Counts in the Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 21-36.

[24] George Barna, *Futurecast: What Today's Trends Mean for Tomorrow's World* (Austin, TX: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2011).

[25] Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003), 61.

[26] David Platt, *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnoma Books, 2010), 185.

(whether attained or not) coupled with the American life style of having plenty on a per capita basis (compared to most other regions of the world) has led the American church into a state of comfort that is really a distraction from what Christ intended. He illustrates his point in a very compelling manner as he states that: "if we make only ten thousand dollars per year, we are wealthier than 84% of the whole world."[27]

Consideration of Platt's perspective requires a balanced understanding of the totality of American life. The United States has within its borders conditions of poverty that are denied or dismissed by many who blame the poor for being poor. For years, American missionaries have used personal resources or the wealth of agencies and churches to travel beyond the borders and across the seas to make disciples and bring relief to the unreached and those less fortunate. As commendable as these efforts are, they are often done while turning away from those who are hungry, naked, and disenfranchised; yet living as neighbors across town in America.

The real significance of Platt's work for consideration in the model of this dissertation project pertains to his challenge for depth of personal inner regeneration of Christians to full submission to Christ and how he must be uncompromisingly followed. Obviously, that would include evaluation and adjustment of how evangelism, training, charity, church practices, and life values are embraced by those who desire to be disciples of Christ.

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[27] Ibid., 194.

Daniel Patte, in an article entitled *Reading Matthew 28:16-20 with Others: How It Deconstructs Our Western Concept of Mission*[28] raises a thought provoking point that there is room for reading the biblical commission text "with others."[29]He suggests the significance of understanding other perspectives (since it is to others to whom disciples are sent). He presents in his article examples of thought from Musa Dube, a Botswanan biblical scholar who wrote about Matthew 28:19a; and from others who perceive western disciple making and interpretation of the *great commission* as imperialist or colonialist oppression. This critique of western disciple making points out a one way pedagogical purpose based upon the beliefs of the disciple maker.[30]

Musa Dube stated in her article:

> The command not only instructs Christian readers to travel to all nations but also contains a "pedagogical imperative"—"to make disciples of all nations." Does such an imperative consider the consequences of trespassing? Does it make room for Christian travelers to be discipled by all nations, or is the discipling in question conceived solely in terms of a one-way traffic? …The answer to this second question is not directly provided by the gospel. Nevertheless the text clearly implies that Christian disciples have a duty to teach all nations, without any suggestion that they must also in turn learn from all nations. Consequently, if all nations are to be entered and "discipled" by Christian teachers without any sort of reciprocal stance or attitude on the latter's part, do we not then find in the gospel an operative model of outsiders as infants to be "uplifted"?[31]

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[28] Daniel Patte, "Reading Matthew 28:16-20 with Others: How It Deconstructs Our Western Concept of Mission," The Society of Biblical Literature, http://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/Patte_Reading.pdf; (accessed, January 25, 2012).

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Musa W. Dube, "Go Therefore and Make Disciples of All Nations (Matt. 28:19a): A Postcolonial Perspective on Biblical Criticism and Pedagogy" in *Teaching the Bible*, eds. Fernando Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 224-245.

A full review of Dube's entire article,[32] revealed valuable information for understanding perceptions of others regarding the western ideological motivations for discipleship. This alludes to a call, and subsequent need to go humbly into the work realizing that others may not interpret the world, history, nor the Bible from the same perspective. It will also help dispel the notion that "because of who we are" disciple making should be imposed upon others, or should be successfully accomplished without challenge, critique, and opportunity for mutual learning.

Another important book by Stephen Prothero entitled: *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon*, examines ways Americans and others have created by way of culture, politics, ethnicity, class, etc. an image or idea of Christ which is like various respective parts of the society.

As he introduces his work, he states:

> To explore the American Jesus, therefore, is not to confine oneself to Christianity. It is to examine how American Christianity has been formed by Christians and non-Christians alike, and how the varieties of American religious experience have been shaped by the public power of the Christian message. Finally, to see how Americans of all stripes have cast the man from Nazareth in their own image is to examine, through the looking glass, the kaleidoscopic character of American culture.[33]

This is all the more reason for disciples or followers of Christ, to make a conscious effort as explained by Michael J. Wilkins, in *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* to "Enter Jesus' first century world, before following him in

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2003), 7.

ours."[34] Deliberately doing this helps followers to visualize; or mentally recast Jesus beyond human limited social ideas that end up isolating and segregating the discipleship work. Only after considering what Christ meant originally could his meaning be applied going forward in any context.

George Barna, in *Growing New Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ,* discusses the significance of "living examples of discipleship" and states that the components are: "(1) becoming a committed, knowledgeable, practicing follower of Jesus and (2) instilling that same passion and capacity in others."[35]

The regenerated model for implementation by Bethel considered that discipleship is in scope, a combination of several other important elements or components that are foundationally integrated to support the whole effort. These specific components are: Strategic Planning, Mission, Evangelism, and Christian Education. Since strategic planning has been introduced in the review of Organization Development literature, it is not described here; however, it is listed because it is a fundamental association.

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[34] Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1992), 34.

[35] George Barna, *Growing New Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2001), 24.

Mission

Lois Barrett in "*Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* wrote that:

> . . . it has taken us decades to realize that mission is not just a program of the church. It defines the church as God's sent people. Either we are defined by mission, or we reduce the scope of the gospel and the mandate of the church. Thus our challenge today is to move from church with mission to missional church.[36]

When speaking of mission, there is a traditional tendency among church people to think of missionary activities or programs in the forms of charity or outreach. The modeling of missions as it pertains to the work in this project of regenerating discipleship includes those things, but extends beyond missionary outreach programming. What is being recommended is how to regenerate *congregational culture* towards a sense of God's mission. This means the whole church is on the mission of Christ. The church is owned by Christ for his mission of discipleship which includes outreach and charity. This project of regenerating discipleship is about church culture change and being *commissioners* with Christ in discipleship.

While this project model is clearly based upon a practical Theology of Discipleship, it is missional in nature and application. A primary resource consulted for state of the art review was David Bosch's *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Missions*. He provides an informed view and description of the nature of

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[36] Lois Barrett, "Missional Church: Sending to Being Sent," in *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, ed. Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998, A Kindle Edition), Locations 218-220.

missions.[37] The value added by Bosch's work was then applied towards the regenerated model for Bethel's Christian Discipleship.

Throughout the book, Bosch supplies in depth review of missiology using theological underpinnings and church history. He defines what happened to and through the church in its mission utilizing six paradigm shifts experienced across ages of time. Bosch maintained that The New Testament must be read as a missiological map.[38] His point was to explain that the church has (and indeed will) experience change over the course of time.

As his work directly applies to discipleship, he provided in chapter two of this book, the connection of *mission* to Matthew 28:18–20, stating that it "reflects an important and distinct sub-paradigm of the early church's interpretation and experience of mission."[39] As he expanded his discussion about mission, he discussed the full text of Matthew within its paradigm of first century disciples. He cautions the church not to think of the original great commission as directly applying to the church within its current context in terms of "adding new members to the congregation or denomination." [40] What he was alluding to was that there was no Christian church formed per se when Jesus issued this command. Instead Christ was sending his followers forth on a mission to make disciples for him.

Since the church has become, through many centuries and shifts of the paradigm, the primary implement for disciple making; it is the church which now must see itself as

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[37] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991). 16-510.

[38] Ibid., 16.

[39] Ibid., 56.

[40] Ibid., 82.

missional in compliance with Christ's command for disciple making, not for the sake of church growth, but for the sake of Christ who enables the church to make disciples to follow him. As a result of discipleship, growth to the church body could be expected. A cultural shift in mental perception of what the church's purpose or mission is will be required in order to see these outcomes. The mission required is primarily to make disciples of Christ.

Having discussed organization development (including strategic planning) and, having reviewed relevant literature regarding mission, what logically follows is the "What should we do?" question. A response to that question emerges from the notion that having understanding of a *missional concept* can develop or regenerate the rest of the process for discipleship. While this regenerated process model for discipleship is based upon Christ's model, it cannot be the same thing for today as it was exactly designed for first century Christians. This means that thoughtful inquiry is necessary in order to lead the analysis in a correct direction. As Cooperrider and Sekerka stated:

> Human systems grow in the direction of what they persistently ask
> questions about. This propensity is strongest and most sustainable
> when the means and ends of inquiry are positively correlated. The
> single most prolific thing a group or organization can do, if its
> aims are to liberate the human spirit and consciously construct a
> better future, is to make the positive core the common and explicit
> property of all.[41]

In the book entitled *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood*, Alan J. Roxburgh contended that the real question in the quest for mission or positive direction for Christians has to be determined by where God is within present context.[42]

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[41] Cooperrider and Sekerka, *Organization Development*, 232.

[42] Alan J. Roxburgh, *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 48.

He recommended that the question of mission is: "How will we indwell both the gospel and the people in neighborhoods where we live and work so that we hear God speak to us in and through them?"[43] Roxburgh contended that the focus upon the church rather than upon mission misguides the church off the path of where God is in the world and how the church should respond. He conjectures that:

> The patterns of Christian life that shaped and gave meaning to Christian life in North America for much of the twentieth century, especially convictions about the place of the church, are breaking apart. How do we figure out what God is doing in the world? It is only as we focus attention on this primary question that we can ever ask what it means to be the church in this new space—but this is a secondary question at this point.[44]

In consideration of the priority placement upon *what God is doing now and what God expects* pertaining to discipleship, books written respectively by Alan Roxburgh and F. Douglas Powe help frame the discussion. Roxburgh's work in *Missional Map-making: Skills for Leading in Times of Transition*, was presented as four steps in the process to become missional.

> Step 1: Assess how the environment has changed in your context
> Step 2: Focus Upon Redeveloping a Core Identity
> Step 3: Create A Parallel Culture
> Step 4: Form Partnerships with The Surrounding Neighborhoods and
>   Communities[45]

F. Douglas Powe offers additional insights in *New Wine, New Wineskins: How African American Congregations Can Reach New Generations*, in which he provides an overview of shifts in contemporary culture relating to generational gaps in African

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid., 119.

[45] Alan J. Roxburgh, *Missional Map-making: Skills for Leading in Times of Transition* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 127-188.

American church. Where the congregation holds on to "old wineskins," mentality and

practices, many churches are left grappling with severe decreases in people and resources

to do disciple making. He states, " If the DNA of the congregation has not been

transformed, then altering the practices will not engender real change." [46] Powe also

suggested a *missional map* (which he recommends should not be regarded as a step by

step solution; but a way to become missional.) [47]

1. Getting Started: by being intentional in prayer
2. Having Faith in God
3. Making Space: Preparing a Place at the Table: Be intentional to engage the community
4. Keeping it Real: making worship for everyone of all ages (particularly post-civil rights generations)
5. Markers: Look for signs of heading in the right direction[48]

Evangelism

A definition of evangelism from the perspective of Wesleyan tradition is offered

by Henry H. Knight, and Douglas Powe, Jr., in *Transforming Evangelism: The Wesleyan*

Way of Sharing Faith.

> Evangelism is our sharing and inviting others to experience the
> good news that God loves us and invites us into a transforming
> relationship through which we are forgiven, receive new life, and
> are restored to the image of God, which is love.[49]

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[46] F. Douglas Powe, Jr., *New Wine, New Wineskins: How African American Congregations Can Reach New Generations* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2012). xvii.

[47] Ibid., 85-108.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Henry H. King, III, and F. Douglas Powe, Jr., *Transforming Evangelism: The Wesleyan Way of Sharing Faith* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2010), 17.

Wesleyan evangelism embodies the gospel of salvation as the reason or purpose for proactively making disciples so that people can get saved and transformed into *newness*. This clearly provides the reason for following Christ. While Jesus is the object of faith, the reason resides within his primary purpose to save us.

Wesleyan Evangelism seeks to get at the basis for why there is a need for disciple making. While it includes the mechanics of church, it gets beyond traditional practice into the soul of the person by sharing with them who Jesus is, and appealing to them to convert to him.

John Wesley understood disciple making to require effort on the part of those being transformed (or discipled) to assist others with their transformation. King and Powe explain that Wesley encouraged the laity to participate in the process of salvation, meaning salvation was not "something done to you, but with you."[50]

Wesley gave voice to women and men alike regarding the need for collaborative outreach of evangelism. Barna stated it as "The corporate goal to introduce other people to Jesus . . ."[51]

While John Wesley spent many hours preaching to thousands of people, he did not rely upon revivalist preaching to be the exclusive implement for evangelism in making disciples, but used class leaders and bands of people to carry out the grass roots level of evangelistic work.

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[50] Ibid., 64.

[51] George Barna, *Growing New Disciples,* 23.

Marva J. Dawn in *A Royal 'Waste' of Time: The Splendor of Worshiping God and Being the Church for the World,* stated that:

> Evangelism is the work of all the saints, not of the worship service. We are the witnesses who reach out to our neighbors and speak to them of the gospel . . . If we want to follow Christ's command, every member of the Christian community will always be "making disciples" as we are "going" about our daily life; then the new believers will be brought into the church for "baptizing" in the name of the trinity and a continued life of worship and growth in the faith.[52]

Dawn has succinctly addressed the real crux of how evangelism must be accomplished. Her work provides insight into why churches often fail to evangelize others because of their exclusive reliance upon the worship service to be the only time, place, and opportunity.

In *Surprising Insights From the Unchurched: And Proven Ways to Reach Them,* Thom S. Rainer shares the paradox pastors and churches face in the work of disciple making:

> A church that totally disregards the needs of the unchurched will reach few if any for the kingdom. But a church that makes most of its decisions based upon the perceived needs of the same group is in danger of losing its biblical identity.[53]

This implies the heart of the fundamental challenge for the church. Ideally, the church is expected to meet the needs of people while fulfilling the requirement to follow Christ's mission based upon *how* God expects it to be done. Realistically, those two objectives are

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[52] Marva J. Dawn, *A Royal Waste of Time: The Splendor of Worshiping God and Being Church for the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 150-151.

[53] Thom S. Rainer, *Surprising Insights From the Unchurched: And Proven Ways to Reach Them* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 89.

in many cases mutually exclusive. The worship experience often tends to become the source of this tension.

In Rainer's follow up book *The Unchurched Next Door: Understanding Faith Stages as Keys to Sharing Your Faith*, he developed a scale for identifying how there are expected differences in response from varied categories of unchurched people pertaining to an invitation to attend church. [54]Surprisingly, the majority of respondents in the survey were open to accepting an invitation. The results of the "Rainer Scale"[55] were shared during the first strategic planning session with Bethel's context team.

Barna research shows that nine out of ten protestant churches contend that they are "committed to the Great Commission." [56] Their findings; however, pertaining to actual church practices suggested that a common emphasis in the interpretation of Matthew 28: 19-20 is upon evangelism (but not Discipleship).

Barna and Jackson, in *Highly Effective African American Churches* posited that Christ's commission was a combination of evangelism and discipleship.

> Evangelism without discipleship leaves new converts spiritually immature and vulnerable; discipleship without evangelism results in isolated and ineffectual training for its own sake.[57]

The model being proposed for this project supports an integrative construct that assures evangelism is a key element of discipleship itself, rather than an isolated

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[54] Thom S. Rainer, *The Unchurched Next Door: Understanding Faith Stages as Keys to Sharing Your Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 61.

[55] Ibid.

[56] George Barna and Harry R. Jackson, Jr., *High Impact African American Churches: Leadership Concepts from Some of Today's Most Effective Churches* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books from Gospel Light, 2004), 77.

[57] Ibid., 79.

component of ministry. Several sources were consulted in the review of evangelism. Louis R. Jones book *Evangelism in the African American Community: An Evangelism Tool for Today's Church* responded to the great commissioning text with a recommendation of a connected series of steps. He states the first step is to "Reach Out… turn toward the church some of the feet that have been passing by its doors."[58]

The lack of doing exactly this first critical step is the cause for failure in doing anything further to make disciples. Someone has to reach the community for the purpose of evangelism.

One of the primary resources consulted for the state of art discussion of Evangelism was an anthology of writings edited by Paul W. Chilcote and Laceye C. Warner entitled: *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church.* In this book, Walter Brueggemann contributed an article entitled *Evangelism and Discipleship: The God Who Calls, the God Who Sends* in which he stated, "The God to which the Old Testament bears testimony is a God who calls, who disrupts lives of settled people, who gives them a vocation . . . "[59] Brueggemann notes that it is the same God who is also sending disciples forward to "to walk and talk."[60] This means to proclaim the Gospel as a mandate of going forth. This is the task of discipleship.

To help differentiate the discussion between evangelism and missions, David J. Bosch added an article entitled: *Evangelism: Theological Currents and Cross Currents*

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[58] Louis R. Jones, *Evangelism in the African American Community: An Evangelism Tool for Today's Church* (New York, NY: iUniverse, 2003), 20.

[59] Walter Brueggemann, "Evangelism and Discipleship: The God Who Calls, The God Who Sends," in *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church,* ed. Paul W. Chilcote and Laceye C. Warner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 220.

[60] Ibid., 224.

Today. He wrote about four perspectives that make this distinction between the two terms

of evangelism and mission. These distinctions are:

> 1) The objects of mission and evangelism are different . . .
> evangelism has to do with those who are no longer Christian or
> who are nominal Christians..mission means calling to faith those
> who have always been strangers to the Gospel [Western verses
> Third world] 2) Some theologians have preference for using the
> word 'evangelism' because 'mission' has a territorial connotation,
> 3) Evangelism is the wider concept, and mission a narrower term,
> and 4) 'mission' becomes the wider . . . and 'evangelism' the
> narrower.[61]

Realizing that most of the western evangelical world understands the terms

evangelism and mission to be the same, it was important for the purpose of this project

dissertation to stress a distinction. Evangelism herein is regarded as *very specific* or is

concentrated for the express purpose of sharing the gospel primarily in word and deed.

This differentiates evangelism from the broader scope of mission to make disciples in any

location or territory. Bosch, in similar thought, *redefined* the distinction between

evangelism and mission.[62]

Other resources also consulted in the anthology were, Orlando Costas,

Evangelism and the Gospel of Salvation [63] Jerry Persha, *Toward Developing an Adequate*

and Comprehensive Understanding of Evangelism, [64] and J. Patrick Vaughn's article,

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[61] David J. Bosch, "Evangelism: Theological Currents and Cross Currents Today," in *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church*, eds. Paul W. Chilcote and Laceye C. Warner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 6-7.

[62] Ibid., 8-10.

[63] Orlando Costas, "Evangelism and the Gospel of Salvation," in *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church,* eds. Paul W. Chilcote and Laceye C. Warner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 33-45.

[64] Jerry Persha, "Toward Developing an Adequate and Comprehensive Understanding of Evangelism," in *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church*, eds. Paul W. Chilcote, and Laceye C. Warner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 313-327.

Evangelism: A Pastoral Perspective.[65]Additional books reviewed included Bryan Stone's *Evangelism after Christendom: The Theology and Practice of Christian Witness*, which stresses the significance of the practice of witnessing. Stone posited that: "If Christians are called to live out of hope, they are also called to share that hope with others, to offer it to others, and even to inspire it and call it forth in others."[66]

Also reviewed was Scott Jones' perspectives of evangelism as a theology in *The Evangelistic Love of God and Neighbor: Theology of Witness and Discipleship.*[67]

The work of William J. Abraham's *The Logic of Evangelism*[68] was consulted. It recommends that evangelism should be viewed as deliberate kingdom building, or initiating people into the Kingdom of God, through the use of ministry. Abraham's perspectives are well discussed throughout his work concerning the Kingdom that is now, and the Kingdom that is to come which is mainstay for Christian witness. The model of this project follows also in agreement with Abraham's thoughts.

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[65] J. Patrick Vaughn, "Evangelism: A Pastoral Perspective," in *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church*, eds. Paul W. Chilcote, and Laceye C. Warner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 264-278.

[66] Bryan P. Stone, *Evangelism after Christendom: The Theology and Practice of Christian Witness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 56.

[67] Scott J. Jones, *The Evangelistic Love of God and Neighbor: Theology of Witness and Discipleship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2008), 99-205.

[68] William J. Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1989), 182-184.

Christian Education

On the website for the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Christian Education

Department, the Executive Director of Christian Education, Dr. Daryl Ingram has the

following statement posted:

> As we move further in the 21st Century, we are challenged by new
> vistas of service and new opportunities of sharing the life-saving
> message of Jesus Christ. To meet these opportunities and other
> responsibilities, the Christian Education Department must focus on
> its primary mission. The Great Commission, Matthew 28:19-20,
> forms the missional foundation of the Church. From the central
> focus, the Church is compelled to teach the commandments and
> observances of Jesus Christ. Therefore, join with the 21st Century
> Christian Education ministry of the African Methodist Episcopal
> Church in teaching Jesus Christ globally.[69]

From an issue dated the summer of 2010, the AME Church Journal of Christian

Education featured, an article entitled *3D Sunday School*. The *3D* stood for "invite,

discover, and connect."[70] The entire article was provided for sharing in the Sunday

School as an impetus for teaching about Discipleship based upon the Matthew 28

commission.

In *The Handbook* for *Christian Education,* prepared for the AME Church,

Kenneth Hill (former AMEC Director of Christian Education) presented the various

departments, and areas of influence that the church deems significant in the development

of people.[71]

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[69] Daryl Ingram, "Word From the Director," African Methodist Episcopal Church Christian Education Department, http://www.ameced.com/director.shtml (accessed April 26, 2011).

[70] Daryl Ingram, "3D Sunday School," *The Journal of Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Christian Education Department, AMEC, Summer 2010), 8-15.

[71] Kenneth H. Hill, *The More Excellent Way: Handbook for Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union/Legacy Publishing, 1994), 6.

In *Religious Education in the African American Tradition: A Comprehensive Introduction*, Hill, presented an in depth survey of African American Christian Religious Education (AACRE). In this text he expanded upon both theology and history as it pertains to the Christian Education experience of African Americans throughout the ages.[72]

Drawing from the model of Daniel Payne, the sixth Bishop of the AME Church, George Barna and Harold Jackson suggest in *High Impact African American Churches*, that Payne saw an interconnection of faith and education. They explain that this created the programmatic approach to Christian Education within the early AME Church. This interconnection was an important measure to assure the preservation of faith among an oppressed people, and also provided them with training and skills to help address the general requirements and economic structures of life.[73]

An underlying assumption of this project is that Daniel Payne's vision remains relevant. There is still very much an interconnection of faith and education in the twenty first century. This is particularly true for the AME Church as it continues to maintain institutions of higher learning both in the United States and abroad; and operates the Sunday School Union Publishing house to prepare materials for use in the local churches.

As the discussion of Christian Education supports the requirement of discipleship, training must extend to parental skills, financial management, family, and relationships. Christian Education must be considered a holistic application of Christian life training that results in discipleship.

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[72] Kenneth H. Hill, *Religious Education in the African American Tradition: A Comprehensive Introduction* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2007). 7-11.

[73] Barna and Jackson, *High Impact African American Churches,* 68.

The connection of the Bible to daily life is vital in order for development of people to become followers of Christ. Barna and Jackson stated that: "Jesus did not die on the cross simply so that people would know Him and then pick and choose the principles and practices He embodied."[74] They determined that in higher performing African American Churches, discipleship is intentionally *zealous*. That zealousness came about as a result of transformation of the congregation:

> Fortunately, there are hundreds of ministers with Daniel Payne's passion and practicality leading African American churches today. In an era when ministers are tempted to soften their messages and water down content in order to attract people and minimize conflict, many black churches are laying strong scriptural foundations in the lives of their people.[75]

Becoming a disciple of Christ means embracing the principles of Christ because one has been trained and prepared for *life* as a Christian…not just as a Sunday worshipper for one to two hours per week. Preparing for this Christian life begins with the learning process which teaches the language of discipleship. The mandate to *teach them to obey everything taught by Jesus* has to assure that learners can enter into dialogue as participants whether they understand everything initially or not. Brad Kallenberg in *Live to Tell*, contended that: "It remains to be seen whether we can reverse the current trend to biblical illiteracy in our culture. But, if it is to be done, it must come by engaging the culture in conversation spoken in our language."[76] This means stressing the use of the Bible for preaching and teaching to help people understand the right way to *say things* as a means for helping them to understand.

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[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid., 71.

[76] Brad J. Kallenberg, *Live to Tell: Evangelism for a Postmodern Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2002), 55.

Kallenberg suggests that everyone lives in a variety of community experiences or paradigms (family, church, work, school, ethic, age, etc.) so shifting paradigms is more complicated as it pertains to the process of learning.[77] This would mean that helping newly converted or unchurched people, as well as church members, to speak the language of discipleship would enrich corporate as well as individual understanding over time.

In the *Christian Educator's Guide*, Nancy Ferguson discussed the centrality of six key elements for Christian Education within the local church. Specifically, she emphasized that a critical element of any Christian Education ministry must address the goals and purpose for Christian Education to determine "what a Christian is and how disciples are formed through education."[78] She also stressed that this is probably the most difficult part of the whole process. She concluded that learning about Discipleship is less about faithful or bad characters, places, and Bible stories, but is more about inward transformation of individuals into disciples.[79]

While researching training and education needs for Class Leader development, The Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church was consulted. Use of this document assured that required practices were included.[80] Two books by David Lowes Watson were also reviewed.

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[77] Ibid., 58-62.

[78] Nancy Ferguson, *Christian Educators' Guide to Evaluating and Developing Curriculum* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2008), 13-14.

[79] Ibid.

[80] AMEC, *Book of Discipline,* , 71-72.

These included *The Early Class Meeting*,[81] and *Class Leaders: Recovering a Tradition*.[82] Additionally, Greg Ogden's, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* was used as a tool for small group or class leader training development.[83]

Other important materials reviewed as pertinent to Christian Education for discipleship included *Educating Congregations: The Future of Christian Education*, by Charles R. Foster. Foster's materials stressed the significance of "Teaching for meaning" as the people of faith seek to become disciples.[84] In *Christian Education in The African American Church: A Guide for Teaching Truth*, Lora-Ellen McKinney, stresses the importance of assessment of Christian Education programs to test for effectiveness.[85] Also reviewed was *The Church As Learning Community: A Comprehensive Guide to Christian Education* by Norma Cook Everist.[86] She approaches the work from the perspective that both teaching and learning are shared responsibilities within the community of faith based upon the many diverse backgrounds and community settings.[87]

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[81] David Lowes Watson, *The Early Class Meeting: Its Origins and Significance* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2002), 127-145.

[82] David Lowes Watson, *Class Leaders: Recovering a Tradition* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2002), 26-37.

[83] Ogden,175-198.

[84] Charles R. Foster, *Educating Congregations: The Future of Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2006), 108.

[85] Lora-Ellen McKinney, *Christian Education in The African American Church: A Guide for Teaching Truth* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2003), 163-166.

[86] Norma Cook Everist, *The Church As Learning Community: A Comprehensive Guide to Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2002), 88.

[87] Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A charge to keep I have, a God to glorify, a never dying soul to
save and fit it for the sky.
                              —Hymn by Charles Wesley, 1707-1788

The Christian Church has remained, through many centuries and shifts in

paradigm, the primary implement for making disciples. The church is challenged today to

reach a better understanding of how compliance with Christ's Great Commission is

important, not just for the sake of church growth, but for helping others become disciples

of Jesus Christ. This proposes a change in perception of what the real purpose and

mission of the church is, compared to the many other initiatives it has been busy doing

for so many years.

David Lowes Watson stated that:

As colleagues of the risen Christ, helping to fulfill God's plan of
salvation, Christian disciples have a clear identity. They are
heralds of *shalom*. They are salt, light, leaven, and seed of the
coming reign of God . . . To accept this identity means a very
intentional way of life; which is why "disciple" and "discipline"
come from the same Latin word, *discipulus*.[1]

For the African American church, the complexities of church life since the

freedom movement of the sixties and seventies have rendered shadows of its former

appetite for social engagement pertaining to the causes of poverty and oppression.

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[1] David Lowes Watson, *Forming Christian Disciples: The Role of Covenant Discipleship and Class Leaders in the Congregation* (Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock Publishing, 2002), 6.

That is not to say churches do not (or should not) address oppression and be attentive to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. These too are mandates from Christ, but must be part of the overall strategy that ushers others into joining the cause of discipleship. By doing the work of making disciples as the primary goal, the church becomes the means for addressing social problems.

The work of this project recommends a refocused view of what Jesus Christ is saying to the church about the charge of discipleship that goes beyond matters of race, class, gender, culture, church tradition, and highly specialized ministries and social causes; while including them as a subset of discipleship.

Bill Hull wrote in *The Disciple-Making Church* that:

> Many churches see church as a place of safety from the storms of life. They believe the primary purpose of the church is care and feeding of the saints. If that were true, it would make the church no more than a way station for the selfish. But their view in no way fits with the biblical vision for the church.[2]

In each Christian context, no one is excused from following the commands of discipleship because of hermeneutics, background, or perceptions. For years, the Christian Church has addressed the basic needs of people depending upon the strength of each church. Churches have, however, settled for political correctness, separatist ideologies, and phobias concerning people who should be reached for the greater goal of disciple making. While it is certain that the breadth of discipleship includes many good works to foster and sustain the church; discipleship must be, in and of itself, considered the main purpose or cause of Christianity and the church. Without being a disciple, one cannot in reality, be a Christian.

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[2] Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 1990), 218.

The risen Christ never released his followers from any part of the specific goal to go make disciples *of all nations* of people; to baptize them, and to teach them to obey what he taught. Today's challenge for the church still includes compliance and placing Jesus as the singular *object of concern,* [3] while serving within a variety of contextual conditions and social stratum, following him into this present world,[4] and allowing his call to give the directions for making disciples for him as required.

This paper is based upon a theoretical assumption of the authenticity of both the Hebrew (Old Testament) and New Testament Biblical texts, which are accepted within the whole of Protestant tradition and faith. The Articles of Religion[5] defining The African Methodist Episcopal Church's doctrine on *Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation* helped to shape the exegetical work for this dissertation project.[6]

Additional scholarly perspectives are included to assure that this work is not limited to a reiteration of personal beliefs and religious doctrine, but offers a balanced review of applicable sources to support an overall project pertaining to Christian Discipleship. Specific foundational excerpts from both the Old and New Testament texts were selected for use to demonstrate and clarify how God calls and sends people forward into commissioned service to bring others into the promises of God.

This is a project pertinent to Christian behavior and response in discipleship that is based upon an historic and theological foundation of Christ's authority, and an establishment of the Christian tradition which began with the assumption that the Gospel

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[3] Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York, NY: Harper, 1957), 1.

[4] Wilkins, *Following the Master,* 34.

[5] AMEC, *Book of Discipline,* 17.

[6] Ibid.

must be shared. The goal for sharing is directed towards transforming lives so that people would dedicate themselves to the work of discipleship.

The work of this project contains a Trinitarian[7] belief in one God and assumes that God (The Father, The Son, and Holy Spirit) wants all people to become followers of God's will. That assumption further interconnects Godly covenantal typology and prophetic pedagogy to extend from the Old Testament forward into the New Testament, and throughout historic and theological concepts of who God is and what the response to God must be.

Biblical Foundation

Old Testament Foundation: Joshua, Chapter 1: 1-5

The Old Testament book of Joshua, often considered a Deuteronomist (D) text,[8] begins with its namesake, Joshua,[9] who was called to succeed Moses in leading the Israelites to complete the last part of their journey into occupancy of *The Promised Land*.

> After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: [2] "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. [3] I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. [4] Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. [5] No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with

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[7] AMEC, *Book of Discipline*, 16.

[8] Achtemeier, 219.

[9] Chad Brand, et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 950.

Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.[10]

Walter Brueggemann, in *Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes,* discussed that the focus on land, is a "defining theme in Old Testament tradition."[11] He wrote:

> . . . one cannot consider the faith of the Old Testament or the God
> of the Old Testament without at the same time being concerned
> with socioeconomic analysis, for land is not just a 'good idea,' but
> actually real estate, that evokes and hosts profound hope,
> imaginative social policy, deep moral conflict, savage acts of
> violence, and acute communal disappointment.[12]

Given that this text is used foundationally to support this project pertaining to Christian Discipleship, it is important to add a point of disclamation. All the moral questions and perplexities surrounding issues of preemptive war, prejudice against other people, invasion of land, and violent imposition visited upon others, are not the values being considered as the basis for *truths* within the framework of this paper, nor in this reading of the text. Instead, what is drawn from this exegetical work is an understanding of: 1. God's selection and assignment of Joshua (who was a disciple or follower of God's commands) 2. the need for compliance with God's specific requirements to receive God's promises, and 3. reliance upon God's characteristic abiding presence throughout the process. These are the intrinsic values applicable for all who are to become and make Godly disciples or followers.

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[10] *The New International Version of The Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Jos 1:1–5. All biblical references in this document from this point forward will be taken from the New International Version (NIV).

[11] Walter Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Publishing, 2002), 120-121.

[12] Ibid., 120.

Moses was referred to in the text as the deceased Lord's *servant*, who had been assigned initially to lead the expedition of the Exodus. [13] Martin Woudstra, in *The Book of Joshua*, explains that Joshua is called Moses' *aide*:

> He [Moses] is referred to by the title servant of the Lord . . . this title is also given to Abraham . . . David, as well as non-Israelite rulers such as Nebuchadnezzar . . . Joshua will not receive this significant title until the end of the book.[14]

An aide is typically an assistant who is intimately knowledgeable of the person and their work to the extent they could succeed in some way in the absence of that person. Contemporary examples might be persons such as Andrew Young, Jesse Jackson, or U.S. Representative, John Lewis, who were former aides to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. These men were close personal followers of Dr. King throughout the Civil Rights movement; and later carried forward certain relevant causal efforts themselves.

Closely following someone's leadership places an aide in the position of being discipled by that person. For many years, Joshua had been discipled by Moses who directly received commands for the people from God.

Walter Brueggemann points out in *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*, that " . . . Joshua is . . . empowered precisely for Torah, for the great work of bringing Israel to its promise."[15] While God had already defined governance according to *Torah*,[16] and expressed the laws to be administered and followed, God

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[13] Myers, 363.

[14] Martin H. Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua: The New International Commentary on the Old Testament,* 2nd. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 57.

[15] Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of The Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 587.

[16] Myers, 1012.

called people (such as Moses, and then Joshua) to carry it forward and to become prime examples, or disciples, for others to see and follow.

While God could have empowered anyone so chosen, Joshua was the one selected because he had faithfully followed Moses instructions from God. By the time of his appointment, Joshua was of seasoned age and experience, and remained obedient to the call and will of God. James E. Smith in *The Books of History,* states:

> At about the age of ninety Joshua must have been filled with apprehension about succeeding Moses. The very fact that God would speak directly to him was of itself a significant encouragement to this aging man of God. [17]

Joshua's necessary acumen assured he could and would understand God's strategic plan and process for how to get the people prepared. It took a leader who had the necessary godly ordained commission to enjoin them all together in the process in just three days. Joshua provided a stellar example of collaborative leadership as he united those tribes who had already settled East of the Jordan along with people who had yet to cross over the river. The soldiers needed to be armed and stationed to protect the massive crowd en route to Canaan's land. It was important to assure that all of the priests were willing to the bear the Ark of the Covenant and to go first into the bulging river to demonstrate complete trust in God's promise. If Joshua had not been trained by Moses to become an obedient disciple and follower of God, the results could have been unsuccessful.

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[17] James E. Smith, *The Books of History* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1995), Joshua 1: 1-9. Logos Bible Software.

Roger Ellsworth, in *Opening Up Joshua* explained that:

> The fact that the people were to follow the Ark served as a picture of God guiding the people of Israel as they entered Canaan. It also pictured for them how their success in Canaan would be achieved, namely, by following the Lord. [18]

The placement of emphasis upon following the Lord points to what it means to be a disciple of God. To be a disciple is to follow God's instructions into a promise of deliverance. While the word *disciple* is not an Old Testament term, it is an expected quality or concept necessary for conforming to God's will. The call and commissioning process requiring Joshua to succeed Moses meant that God expected the people to align themselves with the newly appointed leader.

God's intention was always to provide for the people, deliver them through their challenges, and then maintain a presence with them as they went along in faith. This covenantal typology was in place for Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. Joshua in turn was supporting the Mosaic covenant.

First, taking the people across the overflowing Jordan River and then entering the land were two distinct and consecutive actions. Crossing the Jordan River meant going the final juncture of their trip over the last physical barrier that separated them from where they needed to be. Woudstra points out in *The Book of Joshua*, in his reference to the *Rand McNally Bible Atlas* that The Jordan "runs through a deep gorge which may be called the earth's deepest valley."[19] While crossing the Jordan was to be a pivotal point of transition, complete failure was also possible at the Jordan. This suggests a need for

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[18] Roger Ellsworth, *Opening Up Joshua* (Leominster, ENG: Day One Publications, 2008), 45-46.

[19] E.G. Kraeling, *Rand McNally Bible Atlas* (1956), 26. quoted in *The Book of Joshua: The New International Commentary on the Old Testament,* 2nd. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 58.

understanding the depth of challenge to be expected when following God's commands and directions. Therefore, obedience and commitment are required in order to abide with the challenge.

While advanced scouts had already made it over and back successfully to report what and who was discovered, these were soldiers who were physically prepared to meet the task of spying on the enemy. Bringing a massive crowd of people, livestock, and belongings, would not have been advisable, particularly during the Spring season when the melting snows had swollen the banks of the Jordan River. The nature of these circumstances was, however, the opportunity for God's timing and power to control potential disaster and undergird the ordination of their commission against the forces of nature. The connection to their discipleship was the challenge of remaining steadfast in obedience to God despite obvious conditions of adversity, and going forward regardless of how the situation may have appeared to them. The fruition of the promise was described as such by Alfred Edersheim in *Bible History: Old Testament*:

> As at a distance of about half a mile the Israelites looked down,
> they saw that, when "the feet of those who bore the Ark touched
> the waters, they were arrested." Far up "beyond where they stood,
> at the city of Adam that is beside Zarethan," did the Divine Hand
> draw up the waters of Jordan, while the waters below that point
> were speedily drained into the Dead Sea.
> In the middle of the riverbed, the priests with the Ark halted till the
> whole people had passed over dryshod . . . [20]

As soon as the priests, were told to leave (while still bearing the Ark) the waters of the Jordan rushed back into a natural state. This was proof positive of the enabling power of God to control nature literally and figuratively by *being at the point of their*

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[20] Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History: Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), Jos 3–5:12, Logos Bible Software.

crossing. It was the same power God wielded for the former generation to cross on dry land during the parting of The Red Sea,[21] when leaving Egypt. In that instance, they were *embarking* upon the journey of the exodus. In crossing the Jordan, they were *disembarking* or ending their journey. Discipleship is also an intergenerational construct which leads the people of God on paths of service and followership and then regenerates efforts forward in new directions all leading to God's promises.

God specifically defined that they were to enter the land of promise when they emerged from the river. The point was stressed that the land was for the Israelites. This emphasized the connection between the people of God with the *land* given by God. God was the common factor in this connection. It was incumbent upon them to trust and follow the given instructions about God's laws and requirements. The Israelites had faltered numerous times in the past, but God ultimately saw to it that they did not completely fail *when* they were obedient. Otherwise, they would never have been free to receive any part whatsoever of the ultimate promised land, nor enjoy the community God had called them to by means of God's covenant.

As a result of this calling out of God's people; God gave Joshua a predetermined route to follow in taking the Israelites where and how they needed to go. The boundaries extended from the desert to the Lebanon Mountains on the north, from the Euphrates River on the east, and to the Mediterranean, on the west. This indicates that whenever God assigns explicit boundaries for use, performance, or service, *called people* are obliged to go neither beyond nor short of them. For Christians, the call and choosing of

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[21] Avraham Negev, *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Prentice Hall Press, 1990), Logos Bible Software.

God's people is extended to all people throughout the world who will obediently receive the promise of the salvation of God through Christ.

Somewhat problematic is the isolated mention of the Hittite people.[22] Woudstra notes that their regional reference in the text could mean: "'the land of Hatti' which meant 'Canaan Syria'."[23] John Walvoord, in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* explains it would suggest other national affiliations were also native to the land, and not just all those exclusively called Canaanites.[24]

A deeper look at implications for the Israelite people focuses on their need to walk into the land of powerful people who were known to be militarily stronger, and well established in governance and commerce. This focus serves as a reminder of God's assignment years earlier when Joshua was one of only two spies who did not report that giants inhabited the land. Kenneth Chelst in *Exodus and Emancipation: Biblical and African American Slavery* helps to explain from an African American perspective how fear in facing challenge manifests in the minds of enslaved people who have had their confidence shattered by oppression. [25]

As a result, most spies saw themselves and their own people as impotent grasshoppers rather than empowered conquerors.

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[22] D. R. W. Wood and I. Howard Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 476.

[23] Woudstra, 60.

[24] John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), Jos 1:3–4. Logos Bible Software.

[25] Kenneth Chelst, *Exodus and Emancipation: Biblical and African American Slavery* (Brooklyn, NY: Urim Publications, 2009), 191.

Chelst explains:

> The exodus had not repaired the low self image that had become
> entrenched over two hundred years of slavery. God then decided
> that the generation that had reached maturity in Egyptian slavery
> could not meet the formidable task of conquering and settling
> Canaan. He decreed that the people would be punished by
> wandering the desert for forty years, during which time the
> generation that had left Egypt would die . . . Caleb and Joshua, the
> two spies who spoke against the majority report were . . .
> exempted.[26]

As Joshua, a leader specifically chosen from this former generation, led them

forward into that which was theirs, by the will and grace of God, they had to have

extraordinary faith and expend effort to receive it. These nomadic Israelites were not

facing favorable conditions for likely victory. It meant there was a need to aggressively

invade the territory and wage war against the powerful indigenous peoples.

As God defined the vision of what was available for them, it was really a promise

of what was *possible*. The *probability* of their success rested upon their own trust in God

and compliance with orders to go forward as spoken through Joshua. This was a test of

their courage and conviction. There was no guarantee that they would receive everything

available if there was the slightest deviation in obedience.

James E. Smith, in *The Books of History* explored this further:

> . . . The Lord declared that he had already given (perfect form of
> the verb) every place within that territory where they would have
> the faith to tread (1:3). The gift would be in proportion to the faith
> that they exercised in marching through the land. God always
> rewards courageous faith.[27]

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Smith, Jos 1:1–9. Logos Bible Software

John F. Walvoord, and Roy B. Zuck, in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures,* point out that the Israelites actually ended up with much less than what God's original promise was. The Hittites were never completely driven from the land.

Their presence there is documented many centuries after Joshua.[28] The Biblical text leads readers to conclude that complete victory *would* have been possible through obedience and faith in God.

God reminded Joshua that no one would be able to stand against him and the people of Israel, even though they were treading into occupied unknown territory of people who appeared to have the advantage. The irony is that the people in the land more likely feared the Israelites. This was not because of their perceived strength and valor, but because of the reputed strength of their God, and divine favor extended to them. No doubt, the occupants watched anxiously as they waited for the Israelites to cross the dried riverbed of the Jordan and march en masse upon the land.

According to Richard Hess in *Joshua,* this statement "reaffirms the divine choice of Joshua's leadership "[29] It was to inform the people and their enemies that everything and everybody necessary for their success was in place; and opposition to God's will could not succeed. Roger Ellsworth, in *Opening Up Joshua,* supplied the reason they could expect this:

> Forty years earlier, the people of Israel wavered in faith because
> their spies had seen great warriors in Canaan. Those warriors had
> not gone away and had not lost any of their military prowess. But

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[28] Walvoord, et al., Jos 1:3–4. Logos Bible Software

[29] Richard S. Hess, *Joshua :Tyndale Old Testament Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 77.

Joshua and Israel would have success against them because the
Lord was promising that he would make them flee. The enemies of
Israel could not succeed because God was greater than those
enemies.[30]

Along with this assurance came God's promise for their future. God let them

know they would always have Divine presence in their endeavors when continuing as the

people of God. The "so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you…"

statement, as Hess notes, is *forward looking text* [31] which stresses the kind of perpetual

strength they could expect to come their way as a result of God's presence among their

protected community of Israelites. Understanding God from this perspective assures that

the work of discipleship which Christians are called to do is possible, through the

empowering presence of Christ, even when it appears to be impossible or difficult.

A key benefit to the Israelites was their conditions to build collaboration of effort

as a community of believers. Christian Disciples must do the same kind of aligning of

common goals and interaction with each other to draw upon the same benefit. This

alignment creates the advantages of sharing vision with each other and other people.

Paul Hanson, in *The People Called*, speaks of this community.

The brief exposition of the Decalogue indicates how it embodied
the unique notion of covenant community that had been born in the
exodus experience, and had developed in the early years of the
tribal league. It sought to create, as it were, a protective wall
around this community of freed slaves.[32]

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[30] Ellsworth, 34.

[31] Hess, 77.

[32] Paul D. Hanson, *The People Called: Growth of the Community in the Bible* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 63.

Walter Brueggemann writes of the exodus in *Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes*: " . . . it is a memory that has been kept alive and central in the life of the people through a traditioning process that does not depend upon historical verification."[33] Brueggemann defends the narrative of the exodus on grounds that it articulates important core convictions of biblical theology (particularly YHWH being a *liberating* God).[34] It is evident in this text, that Joshua was to carry out the results of the exodus (or delivery of people into a land designed by God for their communal freedom and prosperity) just as the apostles centuries later were to carry out the results of Christ's liberation, or salvation and delivery of his followers by way of the cross (something that has been equally challenged for historical verification).

The theme of the exodus, and Joshua's role to finish the task, reverberates for any people(s) who have experienced the tragedy of oppression, and a movement from it into the promise of freedom. Kenneth Chelst draws this parallel:

> All Jews who have maintained their religiocultural identity live a Hebrew's existence. In a world that values change and progress, they must constantly remind themselves that their own selves are deeply rooted in the past. There are times in history where there is a strong bridge between the two sides of the Hebrew river and he can move comfortably back and forth. At other times, whenever he crossed the river he becomes an alien, a strange and misunderstood figure without rights and protection of the natives. So it was in the life of Joseph, the first Hebrew to live in Egypt. So it was for his family's descendants when God declared that He was God of the Hebrews. The dual consciousness has, as we shall see a natural parallel for African Americans.[35]

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[33] Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith*, 72.

[34] Ibid., 73

[35] Chelst, 97.

In interpreting the commission of Joshua and the people who were called and tasked to obey God, it is important to consider all the costs of their struggle to gain their freedom and to inherit God's promise through the experience of the journey that led them there. A reflection by Alexander Maclaren in *Expositions of Holy Scripture Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, and First Book of Samuel, Second Samuel, First Kings, and Second Kings chapters I to VII,* is now offered for what literally applied to them, and what figuratively applies for those who follow God's commands now:

> He has Jehovah's command to do it, and Jehovah's promise to be with him, and that is to be enough. We too have sometimes to face undertakings which we cannot see how to carry through; but if we do see that the path is one appointed by God, and will boldly tread it, we may be quite sure that, when we come to what at present seems like a mountain wall across it, we shall find that the glen opens as we advance, and that there is a way, narrow, perhaps, and dangerous, but practicable. 'One step enough for me' should be our motto. We may trust God not to command impossibilities, nor to lead us into a cul de sac.[36]

Being discipled to follow the commands of God as illustrated by this ancient commissioning narrative of Joshua relates to what Christians must understand about making and becoming disciples of Christ. It is like being sent to prepare, and then cross over a *river* of challenge, only to face whatever opposition there may be on the other side. It requires dedicated faith to walk by virtue of Christ's covenant, while answering the call and trusting in God's promises to be present and to assure success.

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[36] Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, and First Book of Samuel, Second Samuel, First Kings, and Second Kings Chapters I to VII* (Public Domain Books, 2005), Kindle Edition e-reader, locations 98-99.

New Testament Foundation: Matthew, Chapter 28:16-20

According to Matthew 28:16-20, sometime after Jesus Christ's resurrection and

prior to his ascension, he appeared to his disciples on a mountain in Galilee for the

purpose of commissioning them to the work of making disciples. The text describing this

event is found, in this definitive and exact form, only in the Gospel of Matthew.

> Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where
> Jesus had told them to go. [17]When they saw him, they worshiped
> him; but some doubted.[18]Then Jesus came to them and said, "All
> authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19]Therefore
> go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of
> the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20]and teaching
> them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am
> with you always, to the very end of the age. [37]

This pericope bears the well known identity of *The Great Commission.* Craig Blomberg's

comment, in the *Holman Concise Bible Commentary: Simple, Straightforward*

Commentary on Every Book of the Bible, states that it is a summary of every major theme

of The Gospel.[38] In *The New Testament: A Critical Introduction,* Edwin Freed indicates

that the Gospel of Matthew ends upon a new direction for the followers of Christ:

> . . . up to the [concluding] point . . . Jesus has charged his disciples
> only to preach and heal. Now at the end, Matthew reports Jesus'
> command to his disciples to continue his teaching. The disciples
> intended are the readers of the Gospel.[39]

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[37] Matt. 28:16-20.

[38] Craig Blomberg, *Holman Concise Bible Commentary: Simple, Straightforward Commentary on Every Book of the Bible,* ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 426.

[39] Edwin D. Freed, *The New Testament: A Critical Commentary* , 3rd ed.(Stamford, CT: Wadsworth/Thompson Learning, 2001), 161.

Freed then notes that the concluding statement of Matthew is: "most effective in a gospel written to be used for teaching in the church." [40]

The text begins with the eleven Apostles going to Galilee at some likely prearranged location on a mountain. The exact location is not known. Yet the significance of Galilee, according to Stanley Hauerwas in *Matthew: Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible,* suggests:

> Jesus began his ministry in Galilee (Matt. 4:12), and it is to Galilee that he will return. The disciples had been called in Galilee, they are now to be regathered in Galilee; later, it will be from Galilee that they are sent forth. Jesus unleashes the disciples to go into the world not from Jerusalem, the center of power, but from Galilee. Galilee becomes the staging area for the disciples to go to the nations to announce the new age begun in Jesus.[41]

As they gathered in Galilee, the text describes that they had doubt while in the process of worshipping the Lord. W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison, in the *International Critical Commentary: Matthew 19-28,* note that the post resurrection form and appearance of Jesus' body were not described at all, but the emphasis is placed upon the words he says.[42] Davies and Allison also support the notion that the word *doubt,* as it is used here, does not mean unbelief, but indicates *divided conviction and uncertainty.*[43]

A broader reading of the Matthean *Great Commissioning* trope suggests applicability of this text to all Christians, throughout all time. Leon Morris, in his

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[40] Ibid.

[41] Stanley Hauerwas, *Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible: Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 247.

[42] Dale C. Allison, and W. D. Davies, *Matthew 19-28,* vol. 3 of *International Critical Commentary Series,* ed. J.A. Emerson, C.E.B. Cranfield and G.N. Stanton (London, UK: T&T Clark International, 2004), 681.

[43] Ibid.

discussion of the *Great Commission,* likens the word *doubt* to *hesitation.*[44] He further

questions whether this hesitation could really only apply to the remaining eleven apostles,

since there was strong possibility that many others could have actually been present:

> . . . perhaps even the group of more that 500 of whom Paul writes
> . . . his would give more scope for people who believed and people
> who doubted than if the group had been limited to the eleven who
> were closest to Jesus.[45]

This was not likely a call to join the Apostolate body, but rather a call to become a

disciple. The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by Gerhard Kittel,

Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, supports this point of view.

> What matters is that the apostolate was not carried over into the
> developing community from the pre-Easter period. It was after His
> resurrection that Jesus, in the apostolate, made the community
> possible as a preaching community . . . [46]

They were in the act of worshipping him despite doubts or hesitancy. Likewise, it

is typical for all Christians who find themselves in unfavorable conditions to waver or

hesitate in their responses to service. While the text makes a point of *doubt*, it is not a

matter that Jesus expounded upon explicitly, or even made cursory response to. The text

abruptly transitions at this point when Jesus made the initial step towards them. He

redirected their focus upon his authority.

Frederick Bruner explained in *Matthew a Commentary: The Church Book*:

> All authority is the first of 'alls' of the Great Commission.
> 'Authority,' as we have often noticed, is Matthew's favorite noun
> for describing Jesus. . . . and it almost has the weight of our

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[44] Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew: The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), 745.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964), 430-31.

English 'deity.' It means executive power. And when Jesus now
claims all executive power, not only in Heaven but on earth, he
means that he is the Chief Executive Officer of the universe, in
complete control of the world. [47]

Bruner then outlines the nature of issuance for Christ's orders:

1. The Commanding Authority, v.18
2. The Commanding Mission, v. 19a
   a. Baptism, v.19b
   b. Teaching, v.20a
3. The Commanding Presence, v.20b [48]

The ultimate authority he spoke from was the transformative power assumed by

his resurrection.

Robert Utley, in *The First Christian Primer: Matthew* confirms that use of the

word *go*[49] was a directive instead of an option or suggestion. The Great Commission was

not a parabolic statement; but was literally a direct command for them to carry out some

very explicit duties by virtue of who Jesus was and upon the foundation he had laid with

them prior to his death.

The *sending,* or commissioning, forwarded their thinking and behavior towards

the work of making disciples in spite of the context of vicious arrests, religious

persecution, executions, scarce resources, and social strife of the day. The listed

requirements recorded in the text were given in a designated order outlining the disciple

making process: 1) gaining disciples, 2) performing baptisms, 3) then teaching others to

obey what they had been taught by him, and 4) knowing he is with them as they go.

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[47] Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew a Commentary: The Church Book, Matthew 13-28* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 813.

[48] Ibid., 805.

[49] Robert Utley, *The First Christian Primer: Matthew*, vol. 9 of *Study Guide Commentary Series* (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2000), 237.

Matthew Easton defines a disciple of Christ as: "one who 1) believes his doctrine, 2) rests on his sacrifice, 3) imbibes his spirit, and 4) imitates his example."[50] *The Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* provides a description of what this would have meant to those in Judea in a general sense:

> The term 'disciple' comes to us in English from a Latin root. Its basic meaning is "learner" or "pupil." . . . In the Greek world the word 'disciple' normally referred to an adherent of a particular teacher or religious/philosophical school. It was the task of the disciple to learn, study, and pass along the sayings and teachings of the master.[51]

Jesus who became their Master Rabbi did not present an ideology based upon the assumption of literal land. Instead, this Rabbi taught them about loving one another and their enemies, how to order their prayer lives, caring for the least members of society, hoping in a new kingdom not of this world (albeit including it), and trusting in him to get them there because of his God given authority as the Son of God.

This *school of thought* was considered heresy and threatening to the Jewish view of Jehovah, whose promise pertained to the God given land in this world. Jesus did not fit the model of the expected chosen figure or *messiah* [52] who would come to assume authority only over the Jews and to replace outside rule over their nation.

Leon Morris, in *The Gospel According to Matthew, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* stated that the teachings from Jesus to his disciples attaches his followers to

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[50] M.G. Easton, *Easton's Bible Dictionary* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996). Logos Bible Software.

[51] Chad Brand, et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 425.

[52] Martin H. Manser, ed., *Zondervan Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), Logos Bible Software.

him in a new covenant. He argued that Christian discipleship includes, but also goes beyond, the principle matters of doctrinal instruction or policies of the group:

> The life of a disciple is different because of his attachment to Jesus. The master is not giving a command that will merely secure nominal adherence to a group, but one that will secure wholehearted commitment to a person.[53]

Becoming a Disciple of Christ then first required an understanding of who Jesus was. That meant a conversion within the mind of his followers about his whole nature. He became to them the Messiah, or Christ, who was deified as both the Son of God and God whose work of salvation connected them to him.

H. Richard Niebuhr, in *Christ and Culture*, described this phenomenon of Christ in the following way:

> The power and attraction Jesus Christ exercises over men never comes from him alone, but from him as Son of the Father. It comes from him in his Son ship in a double way as man living to God and God living with men. Belief in him and loyalty to his cause involves men in the double movement from world to God and from God to world . . . For they are forever being challenged to abandon all things for the sake of God; and forever being sent back into the world to teach and practice all things that have been commanded of them.[54]

The foundational Matthean text does not use the words salvation or conversion, but simply says to *make disciples*. It is however a priori that conversion or salvation must come first to codify the discipling process that has actually begun for the person who is accepting of Christ enough to even start following him.

Next, the text directs where these new disciples must come from. The assigned territory of the commission includes those of all nations. The location of promise begins

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[53] Morris, 746.

[54] H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 2001), 29.

well beyond the boundaries of Canaan's land promised to the Israelites or even the *lost sheep* of Israel. Those who descended the mountain from Galilee that day were mainly born Jews or were Jewish converts. In Christ's commissioning of them as his followers into the whole world, he was actually reversing the physical isolation that attached them to nationalism, laws, and land. The resurrection was the evidence of completion of all task requirements associated with his fleshly existence, and was confirmation to those who would be imitating him in living and sharing the Gospel going forward. His authority and atonement reassigned them and reconciled them to a restored relationship with God, which expanded the concept of God's *promise* of a kingdom of God for all who would become Christ's Disciples.

Next, discipling meant to become and make others *imitators of Jesus*. This imitation first included the open sign of baptism, as a response to their inner conversion, just as Jesus had instituted the act of Christian baptism for his followers. He came to John the Baptist, not as a sinner, but as one who carried the weight and identity of all sinners. He was the messiah who would be fulfilling all righteousness to overcome sin. Therefore, the Baptism he required from the commissioning statement added his position as the *Son of God* who interconnected as God, yet made distinction between the Father and the Holy Spirit. Davies and Allison agree in *Matthew: A Shorter Commentary*. They state, " . . . baptism is part of the imitation of Christ."[55]

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[55] W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *Matthew: A Shorter Commentary* (London, UK: T&T Clark, 2004), 547.

In the *Anchor Bible*, the commentary by W.F. Albright and C.S Mann titled *Matthew: A New Translation,* pointed out the two kinds of statements in the New Testament about being baptized either *in the name of* or *into the name of*:

> . . . we may understand the first formula ('in the name of') as including both the neophytes' expressed faith in Jesus as Lord, and also the ceremonial action which accepted this profession of faith-- i.e., the baptismal rite. 'In the name of,' however, seems in its various contexts to demand an interpretation that calls attention to the result of the baptismal rite. The neophyte being baptized *into the name of the Messiah* thus not only pledges allegiance to Jesus as Messiah and Lord, but is also incorporated into fellowship with him. Hence the expression used in this verse describes entrance into fellowship with the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.[56]

Craig S. Keener, in *The Intervarsity Press Commentary,* explains that in this text Jesus is declaring his authority by virtue of being *God*. Jesus' claim that he would always be with them, coupled with his being named alongside the Father in baptism [since Jewish people did not baptize in the names of people], constitutes a proclamation of his deity.[57]

Baptism among the early Christians typically was performed by either total immersion of the body, or by pouring or sprinkling[58]water over someone who was standing or kneeling in water.[59] For Christians there is a reflective symbolism when Jesus went to the Jordan for Baptism. This was much like the waters parting in the presence of God via the Ark of the Covenant when the ancient Israelites were passing by to go into

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[56] W.F. Albright and C.S Mann, *Matthew: A New Translation,* quoted in *The Anchor Bible,* vol. 26 (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1971), 362.

[57] Craig S. Keener and InterVarsity Press, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Mt 28:19.Logos Bible Software.

[58] Myers, 123.

[59] Presbyterian Church (USA), *Holy Baptism; and, Services for the Renewal of Baptism: The Worship of God* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1985), 54.

the Promised Land. In both senses, God's people were being delivered to salvation by way of God's promise, approval, and blessing at a *cross point* of the Jordan.

While there abounds much interpretive debate regarding the correct physical form of Christian Baptism, this project is based upon an understanding of Baptism from a Methodist tradition. The African Methodist Episcopal Church's response to Christ's commission is to use *water* in the following ways: "effusion (pouring of), aspersion (sprinkling with), and immersion (dipping in) water. In no case shall any person be re baptized."[60]

The AME church additionally extends baptism to infants and young children.[61] John Wesley commented upon Baptism in the following manner:

> Disciple all nations - Make them my disciples. This includes the whole design of Christ's commission. Baptizing and teaching are the two great branches of that general design. And these were to be determined by the circumstances of things; which made it necessary in baptizing adult Jews or heathens, to teach them before they were baptized; in discipling their children, to baptize them before they were taught; as the Jewish children in all ages were first circumcised, and after taught to do all God had commanded them . . . [62]

The next instruction in making disciples was to teach them to obey everything Jesus had commanded of his followers. M.S. Mills, in *The Life of Christ: A Study Guide to the Gospel Record*, wrote: " . . . and having believed, they need to be instructed,

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[60] AMEC, *Book of Discipline*, 671.

[61] Ibid., 20.

[62] John Wesley, *John Wesley's Notes On The Entire Bible* (Kindle Locations 1495-1498) under The Wesley Center on line: http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/john-wesleys-notes-on-the-bible/notes-on-the-gospel-according-to-st-matthew/#Chapter+XXVIII (accessed January 31, 2012).

encouraged, and matured so that they are adequately equipped to convert others . . . "[63] Chad Brand and Charles Draper, in *Holman's Commentary,* add that religious tradition, teachings, and interpretation of scripture came from the master rabbi.[64]

Jesus was the master teacher or *rabbi* for his original followers who were to become like him and learn from him. As he sent them forward, he commanded them to use his teachings so that there would be consistency and accuracy in the quality of information given to those with whom they interacted. The reason it was and is so important that the information be *from* Jesus is because it effects the future performance and compliance of those who receive information. New disciples could not observe nor comply with what they had not received correct instructions for. They could not follow Jesus if they received instructions that had been embellished, modified, omitted, or based upon the teachings of others.

The *whole,* or fullness of the Gospel as it pertains to the specific words and actions attributed to Jesus forms the basis for what is to be taught to those who are becoming Christ's followers. Jesus spent every opportunity teaching and giving examples and sermons about how to interact with others, how to love God, how to treat others, and how to avoid immoral behavior. No one command or teaching of his is of greater importance than the other (with the exception of his summary to love God above all else). He taught all who listened including his followers, curiosity seekers, and detractors. This was the model that Jesus presented to show what it means to make oneself available for the task of teaching his disciples.

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[63] M.S. Mills, *The Life of Christ: A Study Guide to the Gospel Record* (Dallas, TX: 3E Ministries, 1999), Mt 28:16–1; Co 15:6, Logos Bible Software.

[64] Brand, 425.

Matthew 28:20, so often repeated in isolation, contains the verbiage of Jesus' promise to be *with disciples* as they go and do all he commands, " . . . and to the very end of the age". This text conveys words about the provision of comfort, support, and guidance from the Lord's presence for the rest of all time. It is, however, *not* an independent statement. The error in considering it, as often occurs, all by itself is the omission of the weightier conditions by which the Lord has promised his presence. His promise of being *with* his followers *always* was in conjunction with them living out his teachings, and then leading others to be discipled, baptized, and trained so that they too could become makers of disciples.

Albright and Mann noted that: "The presence of this old sectarian formula at the end of this passage is additional evidence that the passage belongs to the earliest stages of the tradition."[65] It is the presence of God, which assures all things possible through Christ. In both the Matthean and Joshua texts, we see the common theme of God's plan to remain with the commissioned, through it all, as they complete the assigned tasks given from God. This promise will last until the end of time and is a common action of God for God's people based upon the concept of *omnipresence* (e.g., believing that God has this ability to be everywhere at the same time). This belief provides assurance of success with whatever goals and challenges have to be met in the course of complying with Christ's great commission of discipleship within current contexts. *God is with God's people . . .* forms the basis for *why* ancient people were enabled and commissioned; first to go into a land of promise and centuries later, from some mountain in Galilee, to *Go Make*

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[65] Albright and Mann, 363.

Disciples. This is the continuum of the Christian covenant, implemented by Christ, which holds followers to his standard of accountability and compliance.

Historical Foundation of Christian Discipleship

The history of Christian Discipleship was founded upon a practice of sharing the Gospel with others so that they might also go and do the same. Over time, this practice has taken on many different approaches based upon national affiliation, political persuasion, religious connection, and tenets of faith. What has transpired over nearly two thousand years in the life of the Christian church, as it became the primary implement of delivery for Christian Discipleship, is a challenge to preserve this simple and direct approach as it was first given by Christ.

Nations have fought wars and governments have tortured people, rejected and oppressed whole groups and races, all in the name of the same Jesus who sent his small group of followers forth into the world. These first followers were sent to make disciples, baptize them, and then teach what Jesus had taught them. Amid all of the drama of Christian History that helped shape the results throughout the world today, Christianity has spread well beyond Jerusalem. Now according to the most recent Pew Forum Research:

> A comprehensive demographic study of more than 200 countries finds that there are 2.18 billion Christians of all ages around the world, representing nearly a third of the estimated 2010 global population of 6.9 billion. Christians are also geographically widespread – so far-flung, in fact, that no single continent or region can indisputably claim to be the center of global Christianity.[66]

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[66] The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, "Global Christianity: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population," The Pew Research Center, http://www.pewforum.org/Christian/Global-Christianity-exec.aspx (accessed, March 24, 2012).

The Early Disciples

It was up to Jesus' original Apostles and disciples to report to others about the

occurrence of his resurrection, commissioning of them, and his ascension into heaven.

Even though they ventured out in different directions on their missionary journeys,

Jerusalem remained the center and hub of the newly forming church and the place for the

first councils or synods of the church.[67]

At the outset they experienced tensions as they grew together to become disciples

of Christ. Their initial perception was to continue obeying all Jewish Temple Laws,

particularly pertaining to the matter of circumcision, according to the Abrahamic

Covenant.[68] Many Gentiles; however, who were becoming disciples of Christ, had never

converted to Judaism. It was the Apostle Paul who was most engaged in clarifying the

pathway forward for the great ingathering of gentiles who were responding directly to

salvation and becoming disciples of Christ *without* first converting to Judaism.[69]

Henry Chadwick explained that:

We know, however, that the faith rapidly reached not only
Damascus but also Antioch, the capital of Syria and third city of
the Roman Empire, where the pagans soon gave them the
nickname 'Christians,' which quickly spread as the popular term.
(The Jewish term for them remained 'Nazarenes').[70]

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[67] John Henry Blunt, *A Key to the Knowledge of Church History*,(Biblio Life, LLC. Public Domain Books. Kindle Edition), 19.

[68] Ted Cabal, eds, et al., *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007), 169.

[69] Achtemeier, 339.

[70] Henry Chadwick, *The Penguin History of the Church: The Early Church* (United Kingdom: Penguin Publishing, 1993, Kindle Edition).16.

The Christians were then challenged to determine what else needed to be adjusted in their thinking. As new congregations were being established throughout the Mediterranean, the Grecian Isles, Africa and beyond; correspondence and missionary work began to spread the Gospel from Jerusalem. Over time, the letters attributed to the Apostles (principally Paul and Peter) and others made their way into what is now considered canon.[71]

Pharisaic Judaism[72] also grew in resilience throughout the empire and began to have more influence over the Temple and Synagogues. Greater attempts were made to thwart Christian missionaries being sent their way. The Jews pressed forward in their resistance against Roman domination. This culminated in the final destruction of Jerusalem and of the Second Jewish Temple in 70 C.E.

The Apostolic Age

The Apostolic Fathers also provided letters, the first of which was sent to the Corinthians from Clement of Rome, dated around Ninety six C.E. Justo L. Gonzalez, in *A History of Christian Thought: From the Beginnings to the Council of Chalcedon, Vol I.* points out that we gain some insight from Clement regarding the pre existence of Jesus and a formula for the Trinitarian doctrine.[73] As this belief in a Trinity became clarified within early Christian thought, it defined what was considered acceptable to teach others about the nature of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. From *The Didache of The Apostles*

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[71] Myers, 187.

[72] Wood and Marshall, 624.

[73] Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought: From the Beginnings to the Council of Chalcedon,* Vol I. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1970), 65.

(Doctrine of the Apostles),[74] Gonzales determines we get insight about the "moralism that very early took possession of some theological currents."[75] Reasons were beginning to emerge for defining what Christians should believe, and how they should respond to Christ in their own experience of conversion.

As a Palestinian Jew, Jesus and his original followers grew up in a Greco Roman culture, but lived under Roman rule. Hellenization[76] (or Greek influence) from the former rule had permeated the society pertaining to language and culture.[77]

As Rome grew in both territorial size and complexity from 350 to 50 BCE,[78] it experienced a number of civil wars and power struggles. The Romans believed they would be more effective if placed under the control of an Emperor who in turn appointed Vassal Kings, Governors, and (or) Procurators for different regions. Military generals assumed greater socio political power in those days because they were entrusted with conquests, acquisitions of land, and with keeping the *Pax Romana*[79] (Roman Peace). Material edited by Paul J. Achtemeier indicates: "The Romans saw themselves as the legitimate rulers of the civilized world."[80] This extended to the empire's religion, border

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[74] *The Didache: The Lord's Teachings Through the Twelve Apostles Early Christians* (Kindle Edition), Locations 34-35.

[75] Gonzalez, 70.

[76] Myers, 37-38.

[77] Freed, 10.

[78] Charles Rivers, ed., *The Roman Empire: A Brief History* (Publisher Vook, Kindle Edition, 2011), Locations 133-135.

[79] Myers, 893.

[80] Achtemeier, 876.

controls, language, infrastructure, culture, commerce, maritime navigation, internal affairs, and domestic order.[81]

The Roman mistreatment of Christians began to escalate because disciples of Christ were considered at odds with the Pax Romana. Michael Green explained, in *Evangelism in the Early Church,* concerning the history of Roman Religion,[82] that as far as Rome was concerned, everyone had a right to his or her own private faiths. These faiths were classified as *superstitio*. Likewise, any number of gods could be added to the pantheon; but it was required that everyone would participate in joint worship and sacrifice or *religio*.[83]

The Christians saw Jesus Christ as Lord over a new Kingdom not of this world. They were not amenable to bowing down or worshipping other gods or Emperors who had begun to call *themselves* gods. This was not a perspective (or *superstitio*) considered beneficial nor tolerable to Rome, but was considered anathema. All of the Apostles and disciples, early church officials, teachers, apologists, theologians, and missionaries were targeted first for hideous torture and executions to make them examples for others of the impending wrath of Rome. This was meant to crush the advance of the church.[84]

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[81] Negev, Logos Bible Software.

[82] Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 57.

[83] Ibid., 56-60.

[84] James P. Eckman, *Exploring Church History* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 11.

In James Craigie Robertson's *Sketches of Church History From A.D. 33 to the Reformation,* he adds that: "All the Apostles, except St. John, are supposed to have been martyred (or put to death for the sake of the Gospel) . . . "[85]

The Roman Church Age

This mayhem against Christians lasted until the Emperor Constantine authorized Christianity to become the national religion of Rome around 300 C.E. Then, the conversion to Christianity, or approach to disciple making, took on a more dogmatic approach. Remnant Jews in the region, and in all places, were especially targeted for oppressive and forced proselytizing that was not based upon willing conformance or loving obedience to God. Instead, it was now the Government which had declared itself Christian.

When the Roman Empire collapsed around 476 C.E. there was a prevalence of poverty throughout all of Western Europe. The church was still considered universal, but local bishops, many of whom went without any restraint, controlled it. It gave way to what is often referred to as the Dark Ages (or beginning Middle Ages which lasted until the fifteenth century). Steven Ozment notes, in *The Age of Reform*, that: "During the early Middle Ages, Goths, Vandals, Burgundians, and Franks dominated Western Europe, while the Arabs controlled the Mediterranean."[86] Ozment also notes that the

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[85] James Craigie Roberts, *Sketches of Church History From A.D. 33 to the Reformation*, Published under direction of the Tract Committee. (London: E.&J.B. Young & Company, 1887, Kindle Edition), Locations 489-493.

[86] Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform (1250-1550): An Intellectual And Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1980), 1.

medieval era gave many theological faith perspectives from Augustine, Aquinas, Lombard, and others.[87]

Beginning in the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries, forces of Europe joined together in waging crusades to viciously roam the countrysides down into Holy Lands. They invaded to get rid of both Jews and *Saracens* (Muslims) who were occupying the land. They were given the option to convert and recant, or suffer and die at the hands of the crusaders.[88]

The Age of Reform

Towards the latter days of the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church in Western Europe became a hierarchy under a Pope having supreme authority. Printing of literature, particularly the Bible,[89] and advances in literacy fostered greater interest in personally understanding God. Towns and cities began to grow in numbers, and many wanted to be free of Church control and domination that required them to pay heavy indulgences and suffer harassment over any accusation of heresy. There was a period of Reformation that lasted from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries and resulted in a complete division of the church into Catholicism and Protestantism.

This movement of protest and reform is often credited to Martin Luther of Germany who posted his *Ninety Five Theses* to the doors of the church at Wittenberg, on

[87] Ibid.

[88] *The First Crusade at the Council of Claremont*, http://www.middle-ages.org.uk/the-crusades.htm: (accessed, January 29, 2012).

[89] Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc., 1996), Logos Bible Software.

October 31, 1517.[90] There were, however, many reformers throughout all of Europe who forcefully led movements from varying perspectives of reform.

In England, the reforming ideas were of a different ilk. The King of England, Henry the VIII, considered himself the *defender of the faith*; and placed himself as the godly ordained authority to establish the Church of England.[91] The Church of England remained Catholic in its theology and worship, but reformed in its governance.

During the reign of King Edward VI in 1547, reformation resurfaced with the work of Thomas Cranmer and other Protestant reformed teachings. It began to spread throughout England resulting into what became later the Anglican Church. Then a brief but violent shift back occurred during the time of Queen Mary (the eldest daughter of Henry)[92] who was intent upon reinstating Catholicism. This effort was later replaced with what James Eckman, in *Exploring Church History,* concludes was a more neutral position when Queen Elizabeth I assumed the throne: " . . . The core of her solution was that the Anglican church would be Protestant in its theology and Catholic in its ritual . . . "[93]

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[90] Martin Luther, "Disputation of Doctor Martin Luther on the Power and Efficacy of Induigences (1517)," trans. Adolph Spaeth, in *Works of Martin Luther,* ed. L.D. Reed et al. (Philadelphia, PA: A. J. Holman Company, 1915), 29-38.

[91] *A Christian Presence In Every Community: History,* "An Ancient Church Catholic and Reformed," The Church of England, http://churchofengland.org/about-us/history.aspx (accessed January 1, 2012).

[92] Eckman, 55-56.

[93] Ibid.

Methodist Tradition

John Wesley was born in seventeen hundred and three in Epworth at Lincolnshire, England. His Father, Samuel, was the Rector at Epworth. Both his father and his mother, Susanna, were converts from Puritanism to the Anglican Church.[94] After reaching adulthood and being educated at Oxford, John Wesley entered ministry. He was ordained as a Deacon, and two years later as an Elder in the Anglican Church.

Wesley spent some time in parish ministry and as a *fellow* at Lincoln College. Jason Vicars in *John Wesley: A guide for the Perplexed* notes that the entire focus of Wesley's ministry upon his return, began to change based upon a group his brother, Charles Wesley, and others had formed for regular meetings of prayer, mutual confession, and helping others in need:

> Wesley joined the group, and before long he was recognized by outsiders as the group's chief leader. . . . a number of people began referring to them rather derisively as the Holy Club, the Bible Moths, the Sacramentarians, and the Methodists. For better or worse, the name 'Methodist' eventually stuck.[95]

John Wesley became what is now known as the great, but sometimes enigmatic, *Father of Methodism.* It was never his intent to found a new faith tradition. His greater mission was to bring reforms to the eighteenth century Anglican Church.

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[94] Jason E. Vickers, *Wesley: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York, NY: T&T Clark International, 2009), 6-7.

[95] Ibid., 12.

As noted in an editorial work, *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, by
Randy Maddox and Jason Vickers, the church's greatest ills were:

> . . . the clergy were frequently non-resident in their parishes; the
> issue of tithes, which led to disputes between clergy and those who
> were not members of the church, and antagonism from
> parishioners who resented clergy gaining from improvements in
> agricultural production; the increase gentrification of the clergy,
> which supposedly distanced clergy from the greater majority of
> their parishioners; and a slothful attitude to pastoral work, which
> left the parishioners bereft of pastor care.[96]

John Wesley believed his input would be of some value to raise the standards of
performance, and he began to gather people for meetings.

Dissention had always existed against the Church of England from other groups
such as the Puritans, Baptists, Calvinists, etc. There was, however, some legal provision
for non-conformity as long as it was approved.[97]

Maddox and Vickers indicated that Wesley did not view the *Methodists* to be
nonconformists and saw no need to register his efforts as such.[98] At that time, Methodists
were still attending the Anglican church and participating in the sacraments. They were
simply holding additional separate meetings.[99]

While on a missionary trip to Savannah, Georgia, a storm arose and threatened the
ship that Wesley and his brother Charles were on. He noticed the dedicated worship and

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[96] Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 25.

[97] The Encyclopedia Britannica noted that this was accomplished by The Toleration Act of May, 1689. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/598612/Toleration-Act (accessed January 31, 2012).

[98] Maddox and Vickers, 36-37.

[99] Vickers, 9.

calmness of the Moravians[100] (most associated with the Czech reformer, John Hus), who were also on the ship. It caused Wesley to question the strength of his own faith and his connection with the Holy Spirit. When he returned home to England, Wesley met another Moravian, Peter Bohler, whose influence led him to a deeper understanding of his own faith. Afterwards, Wesley journaled about his newly discovered experience of response to the Holy Spirit:

> In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change, which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death (J&D, 18:249-50).[101]

Later, Wesley attended the Moravian organization called the Fetter Lane group where he learned about the defined process of *classes*. This informed his eventual adoption of *classes* for the Methodists who were following him:

> The division of Herrnhut into neighborhood divisions called choirs provided the basis for eleven geographical 'classes.' In addition, there were ten classes determined by gender and age, which provided the basis for daily spiritual oversight and regular religious conference. At the heart of their program of spiritual nurture stood ninety 'bands' which met two or three times a week to follow ... the pattern of Bohler's rules for the Fetter Lane group in London."[102]

The use of itinerant ministers, class leaders, and open air preaching were the primary tools he used to teach and develop disciples. The ministry that John, his brother

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[100] The Moravian Church "Our History," The Moravian Church in North America, http://www.moravian.org/history/ (accessed February 1, 2012).

[101] Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1995), 80.

[102] Ibid., 85.

Charles Wesley, and George Whitfield began was an evangelistic outreach to convert others to Christ (making disciples). They traveled more than 250,000 miles and preached 40,000 sermons.[103] At first it began with field preaching, where according to Wesley's journaling, " . . . 'three or four thousand' attended."[104] From a purely historical record, Wesley later disagreed theologically with Whitfield's adherence to Calvinism, which was not congruent with Wesley's more orthodox Arminian theology.[105]

Much of the response to Methodism from America occurred during the period of the American Revolution. John Wesley was a Tory, and was not sympathetic to colonial independence from the government nor from the Church of England.
To him, it would have been disobedient to God's will. Nonetheless, he attempted to hold his position by *agreeing to not agree.* The whole matter created tension and retribution for those in the colonies who wished to follow the teachings of Wesley, but supported their own political cause of freedom from England.[106]

Once the war had ended and the Articles of Confederation fostered the new nation; Wesley determined that it was important to ordain itinerant ministers for those who were in the states, and to recognize the freedom now afforded those in America.[107] On Christmas Eve in 1784 at Lovely Lane Chapel, in Baltimore, Maryland, Bishop Francis Asbury, who had previously worked to spread Methodism throughout the

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[103] Paul P. Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1997), 492-493.

[104] Heitzenrater, 99.

[105] Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *Foundations of Wesleyan-Arminian Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1967), 68-69.

[106] Frederick A. Norwood, *The Story of American Methodism* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1974), 84-91.

[107] Ibid., 100.

colonies, held a conference. This conference established an independent Methodist Episcopal Church within the United States.[108]

Until his death, John Wesley still considered himself an Anglican. Heitzenrater explained: "Over a period of more than sixty years, Wesley had developed methods and procedures that, while intended to 'reform' the Church of England, in fact gave the Methodists a self-conscious identity distinct from the Church."[109] Mark Galli and Ted Olsen noted in *131 Christians Everyone Should Know*: "Today Methodists number about thirty million worldwide."[110]

The Methodist denomination is represented by churches of: The United Methodists, The African Methodist Episcopal, The African Methodist Episcopal Zion, The Christian Methodist Episcopal, the Free Methodist Church of North America, and many others. The Wesleyan tradition of *holiness* also served as the basis for other denominational movements, such as by Charles Grandison Finney,[111] Charles Parham[112] of the Pentecostal movement; and Phineas Bresee,[113] of the Nazarene church.

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[108] Ibid.

[109] Heitzenrater, 312.

[110] Mark Galli and Ted Olsen, *131 Christians Everyone Should Know* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 183.

[111] Eckman, 87-88.

[112] Edith L. Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith: The Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism, and American Culture* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 26 and 56.

[113] Carl Bangs, *Phineas F. Bresee: His Life in Methodism, the Holiness Movement and the Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1995), 41.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC)

Most of what the founder of the AME Church, Richard Allen, had his son record in his autobiography pertained to his spiritual journey and outward reach to assure others their full salvation through Jesus Christ; and the freedom to practice religious worship. Allen's early life (from what little information there is before he took the name of *Richard Allen*)[114] was difficult.

He reported that he was born as a slave in 1760, and was owned by Benjamin Chew, Chief Justice of Philadelphia.[115] When he was a child, Richard, his parents and his three siblings were sold to a farmer named Stokeley Sturgis who lived near Dover, Delaware. Richard described him as "what the world called a 'good master'." He recounted that Sturgis, who did not have resources to support the entire family, later sold Richard's mother and three of his five siblings. It was the *bitter pill*[116] of slavery, which led Richard to seek his own freedom in spite of any perceived acts of kindness extended to the enslaved.

Upon his religious conversion at about the age of seventeen, Allen began ministering and immediately exhorted others to give their lives to Christ. He and his brother had been attending the local Methodist society. Richard began preaching to both black and white congregations, and traveled the Methodist circuit throughout South

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[114] Richard S. Newman, *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers* (New York, NY: University Press, 2008), 30.

[115] Richard Allen, *Richard Allen 1760-1831, The Life, Experience, and Gospel Labours of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen: To Which is Annexed the Rise and Progress of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America: Containing a Narrative of the Yellow Fever in the Year of Our Lord 1793: With an Address to the People of Colour in the United States.* Manufactured by the AMEC Sunday School Union, (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union/Legacy Publishing, 1990), 13.

[116] Ibid., 16.

Carolina, New York, Maryland, Delaware and Pennsylvania.[117] He reported "walking until his feet became so sore and painful that I could scarcely be able to put them to the floor."[118]

Allen was asked by the Methodist elder to preach at five o'clock in the morning to the black congregants at St. George's Methodist Church in Philadelphia. He also preached sometimes four or five more times throughout the day in the black neighborhoods of Philadelphia. Because he was able to reach other African Americans, he was inspired with the following idea:

> I raised a society in 1786 of forty-two members. I saw the necessity of erecting a place of worship for the coloured people. I proposed it to the most respectable people of colour in this city; but here I met with opposition. I had but three coloured brethren that united with me in erecting a place of worship--the Rev. Absalom Jones, William White, and Dorus Ginnings. These united with me as soon as it became public and known by the elder who was stationed in the city.[119]

Allen, along with others, decided that there was a urgent need to establish the Free African Society (FAS) in Philadelphia during 1787.[120] This organization served as a mutual aid group to address the temporal needs of African Americans,[121] which were not being met otherwise. The Free African Society included people of all religious persuasions, but was intentionally designed to not be for religious purposes.

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[117] Ibid., 9-11.

[118] Ibid., 16-18.

[119] Ibid., 22.

[120] *The Columbia Encyclopedia,* 6th ed., "Richard Allen 1760-1831," http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Richard_Allen.aspx (accessed October 27, 2010).

[121] Anne H. Pinn and Anthony B. Pinn, *Fortress Introduction to Black Church History* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 31.

By 1786 blacks made up about ten percent of the Methodist church throughout the United States. Although whites and blacks often worshipped together, Galli and Olsen remark that: "Negro Pews or African Corners were typical features."[122] Dennis C. Dickerson, former historiographer for the AME Church wrote and published on the AMEC website that: "When officials at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church pulled blacks off their knees while praying at the altar, FAS [Free African Society] members discovered just how far American Methodists would go to enforce racial discrimination against African Americans . . ."[123]

For Richard Allen, this was the moment of transition regarding the following offense, as well as the whole issue of racism from the church:

> "Absalom Jones said . . . 'Wait until prayer is over, and I will get up and trouble you no more.' With that he [a trustee] beckoned to one of the other trustees, Mr. L-- S-- to come to his assistance. He [the trustee] came, and went to William White to pull him up. By this time prayer was over, and we all went out of the church in a body, and they were no more plagued with us in the church."[124]

The Free African Society later became more influenced by Episcopalian and Quaker religious thought. This caused Allen to leave the group. By his own admission, he was staunchly a Methodist. It was then when Absalom Jones became the leader of the St. Thomas African Episcopal Church of Philadelphia, founded in 1792.[125]

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[122] Galli and Olsen, 187-88.

[123] Dennis C. Dickerson, "About Us-Our History" African Methodist Episcopal Church, http://www.ame-church.com/about-us/history.php (accessed October 27, 2010).

[124] Allen, 23.

[125]The African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas was founded in Philadelphia in 1792 by Absalom Jones. Stephen D. Glazier, ed., *Encyclopedia of African and African-American Religions: A Berkshire Reference Work* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), 310.

After fifteen years of struggling against the Methodist Episcopal Church's determination to stop the progress and establishment of a separate African Methodist church, in January of 1816, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled in favor of Allen and others. In April of that year, delegates from several black Methodist churches met in Philadelphia to form The African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC). Richard Allen was ordained as an elder and then consecrated as its first bishop.

The AME Church was founded by people of historic merit who established districts, churches, and schools throughout the United States and other parts of the world. It is from this historical foundation it has grown to nearly two million people worldwide and is based upon an objective of discipleship that *had* to factor in the need to intentionally address social and economic conditions of oppressed people who were to be *discipled*. The AME church mission is: " . . . to minister to the social, spiritual, and physical development of all people."[126] Listed as the first objective is *Discipleship*.[127]

William Paul Quinn (1788–1873)

During the General Conference of 1840, an Elder, William Paul Quinn was commissioned to plant new churches in the expanded territory west of the Ohio. During his report at the next General Conference, four years later, he announced a total of forty-seven new church plantings in Indiana and Illinois.[128] This was a phenomenal accomplishment, considering it was done without the convenience of modern

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[126] AMEC, *Book of Discipline*, 6.

[127] Ibid., 16.

[128] Daniel A. Payne, *History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, ed. C. S. Smith (Nashville: AMEC Sunday School Union, 1998), 170.

infrastructure, travel, and communications. Because of his contributions to church

expansion and growth (*going to make disciples*), Quinn was elected and consecrated as

the fourth Bishop of the AMEC in 1844.[129] His expansive disciple making did not end

there, but extended westward and on to Texas. There are numerous AME Churches west

of the Allegheny Mountains, bearing the name of *Quinn*. In addition, Paul Quinn College

founded in 1872, and now located in Dallas Texas was also named in honor of Bishop

Quinn.

<div align="center">Daniel Alexander Payne (1811 –1893)</div>

The most prominent AMEC historic figure to champion the cause of *training the*

disciples was Daniel Alexander Payne, who was elected and consecrated in 1852 as the

sixth Bishop of the AMEC.[130] He was known as the intellectual leader of the church. He

envisioned and worked to assure there was education available for the people not just for

the sake of literacy, but to advance their status as a people and Christians. In the mid

nineteenth century, he especially espoused the need for a trained clergy and raised the

standards for ministry.[131] He wrote the first history of the African Methodist Episcopal

Church. Under his leadership, the church expanded its foreign missions, reorganized its

publication program, and formed hundreds of new congregations. Daniel Payne was

instrumental throughout the founding of Wilberforce University in Wilberforce, Ohio,

and became its president in 1856[132] He, then became the first black college president in

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[129] Ibid., 170-172.

[130] R.R. Wright, Jr., *The Bishops of The African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Nashville: The A.M.E. Sunday School Union, 1963), 277.

[131] Payne, 397.

[132] Ibid., 270.

America. He served also as the first Dean of Payne Theological Seminary established in 1871 in Wilberforce, Ohio (which is named for him). Many churches also bear the name of Payne.

Henry McNeal Turner (1834 -1915)

Henry McNeal Turner, in 1880, became the twelfth elected and consecrated Bishop of the AME Church. President Lincoln appointed him to be the first black chaplain for the Union forces during the Civil War. After the war, Turner established missions and congregations throughout the Southern States and abroad into the Caribbean, the continent of Africa, and later into Europe, earning him the moniker of *Apostle of Foreign Missions;*[133] (*going to people of all nations*).

He preached often that: "God is not White, and that the American flag was a 'rag' if it was of no protection for southern blacks against the evils of lynching and denied voting rights."[134] His legacy of boldness and social engagement remains important for the church to assure its prophetic call regarding social responsibility and justice. Many AME Churches are named for Bishop Turner, as well as Turner Theological Seminary, (which is now a part of The Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia).

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[133] Wright, *Bishops of the AMEC,* 340.

[134] Ibid., 338.

Bethel AME Church of Middletown, Ohio

> In 1860, a small membership of friends met and worshipped
> weekly at their 'Cottage Prayer Meetings' held at a member's
> home. This small, but faithful, membership was the founders of
> our present day Bethel A.M.E. Church in Middletown, Ohio.[135]
> —Bethel AME Church, *History Record*

In the beginning, the little group of friends was not, by definition, a church (or named Bethel), but was a gathering of persons of faith seeking to study the bible, pray, and worship in pursuit of becoming disciples of Christ. Whenever Bethel recognizes or celebrates it anniversary, it is the 1860 date that is most referred to and meaningful. Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church was actually organized and registered into full connection with the AME Church in August of 1873.

The historical records indicate that Rev. Moses Walker of the Hamilton AME Church (currently Payne Chapel AMEC) met with others to help organize a church in Middletown. By this time, the programmatic extension of the AME church, itself, through the efforts of Bishop Paul Quinn and others had already moved throughout the mid west, and reached to the west coast and beyond to Africa and Caribbean.[136]

The first step taken to become a recognized AME congregation was to enlist the services of Reverend Henry Atkinson, who held worship services in a school. Rachel Hunter and other founders then organized in August of 1873 to make plans for a place of worship. Others listed on the record or membership roll were "Richard Edwards, Nettie

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[135] Bethel AME Church History including: Bethel's Church Historical statement compiled July, 2010; several unpublished printed versions of church documents, and anniversary booklets, as well as member verbal and oral history accounts.

[136] Payne, 473-98.

Edwards and her son, Richard Edwards, George and Carrie Strodder, James Burgett, Alice Burgett, George Howe, Ann Howe and her son."[137]

In 1874, the first church facility was erected at 1019 Columbia Avenue, in Middletown, Ohio. Its congregation was considered a *mission*[138] and was placed in what was known as the Springfield *circuit*.[139] It was assigned in 1876 to a larger district known as The Middletown Glendale Circuit. By 1903, Bethel had grown and was identified as a *station*.[140] As the congregation increased, there was a need for additional space, and the church purchased land at its current location of 1507 Yankee Road in 1955. Twenty years later, it completed the present facility. Additional expansions occurred during the mid eighties. These included a conference room, offices, baptismal chapel, and additional rest rooms to accommodate the expanding growth in membership attendance, which reached its highest all time average of one hundred and sixty five by 1987.

This average has dropped and plateaued to one hundred and twelve over the last twenty years, with only slight overall increases or decreases in growth.

Over the span of one hundred and fifty two years, thirty pastors of record have served the congregation of Bethel. Bishop C. Garnett Henning, the former Presiding Prelate of the Third Episcopal District, appointed the current Pastor, Rev. Melonie A. Valentine, the first woman pastor, on October 31, 2009.

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[137] Bethel AME Church History.

[138] Small or dependent congregation or charge. Usually the minister has more than one mission. African Methodist Episcopal Church, *Book of Discipline*, 677-678.

[139] Two or more churches under one Pastor. Ibid, 673.

[140] General understanding throughout the AME church of *full church status* for a congregation. Melonie Valentine, February 3, 2012.

Rev. Valentine believes that her call to serve Bethel was an assignment from God pertaining to discipleship. That is what informed the vision statement: "Disciples Engaged in Christ's Service." This is the basis for why this project for a regenerated model of discipleship for Bethel AME Church was undertaken.

Theological Foundation

Christian Discipleship is based upon a theological understanding of and response to Jesus Christ who required converts to follow the behavior he demonstrated and taught. Likewise, Christians are to comply with his commission to facilitate the process for others. It is a continuous cycle of becoming and reaching out to others with the cause of the Gospel. It requires clear understanding that salvation is freely given; but following Jesus' call to discipleship is not. It comes at an inescapable cost to Christians. Being saved or given rebirth requires expending oneself in submission to Christ. The costs are measured in the respective levels of dedication, service, resources, time, and self will.

The Theology of Christian Discipleship

Michael J. Wilkins in *Following the Master, a Biblical Theology of Discipleship* provided a glimpse of the reality that must be confronted when considering what following Christ really means:"Discipleship appears simple to understand at first glance, yet the more one examines what Jesus was doing with his disciples, the more complex the issues become."[141]

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[141] Wilkins, 25.

Wilkins additionally referred to John James Vincent's discussion of this complexity, which states:

> . . . the discipleship words of the Synoptic Gospels—and others like them, have always been either a fascination or an embarrassment to the Church . . . For some of the greatest names in Christian biography—Benedict, Francis of Assisi, Jacob Boehme, William Law, Soren Kierkegaard, Dietrich Bonhoeffer—here lay the key to the mystery of Christian existence. But for the Church in general, they have always constituted a problem. If the words are to be taken literally, then there can be but few who can be disciples. If they are to be taken symbolically or spiritually, then they plainly mean something different for us than they meant for those who were first called.[142]

The *Theology of Discipleship* is clearly a response to the Biblical Gospel which contains Jesus' teachings. Since the Great Commission text of the Gospel of Matthew was selected for a foundation of this project, it also serves as basis for the shaping of the theology of discipleship being considered. From this derived information, a theological formula was developed which now presupposes our acceptance of: (1) Jesus the Savior as the Son of God, the resurrected and ascended Christ, who is one of the distinct but equally included members of the Trinity, (2) Christ having absolute Godly authority to call for and order compliance to follow him, (3) willingness to faithfully obey his instructions, and (4) trust that Christ will assure blessings and his presence with his disciples as they go forward in his service.

Wilkins points out that there is a plethora of Christian Discipleship models and literature to select. He makes a distinction among them, and places them into categories he calls *Discipleship Studies.* He lists them as: (1) disciples are learners, (2) committed believers, (3) ministers, (4) converts who become disciples later, or (5) converts who are

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[142] Ibid.

in the process.[143] This exposes the problem that Wilkins reveals regarding the selection of which theological discipline, doctrine, category or response to Christ is correct.

In the development of a *Theology of Discipleship* for the work of this dissertation project, it is asserted that Christian Discipleship is not isolated into any one theological construct of Christology,[144] Pneumatology,[145] Trinity,[146] Soteriology,[147] Parousia,[148] or Eschatology.[149] Nor is Christian Discipleship singularly considered Anthropology,[150] Ecclesiology[151] or religious tradition. Instead, it is a synergized theology, which is a systematic amalgamation of all these things together, and is manifested in the individual's response to Christ's command to *go and make disciples* for him within the current context.

There is also agreement with Wilkins position that, in order to place Discipleship within modern context, we must first: " . . . enter Jesus' first century world, before following him in ours."[152] In so doing, it means a review of not only what Jesus did with his Apostles and other contemporary disciples, but also what the first century disciples

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[143] Ibid., 26-34.

[144] Brand.,285.

[145] F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. rev. (Oxford, ENG: Oxford University Press, 2005), 788.

[146] Achtemeier,1098.

[147] Kittel, Bromiley and Friedrich, 328.

[148] Easton, Logos Bible Software.

[149] Myers, 347.

[150] Brand, 71.

[151] Cross and Livingstone, 529.

[152] Wilkins, 34.

did within their circumstances to respond (as described in the Acts of the Apostles and other letters written to the early churches). It still requires bearing in mind what their specific situations were. Then, to extrapolate beyond these beginnings of Christianity, it is important to learn from later voices how the Theology of Discipleship was informed and carried out.

Theological Underpinnings: Faith and Beliefs

While there is an intended purpose herein to conduct an inquiry into theological perspectives of Christian Discipleship, there is a greater need to determine what Jesus said and did so there is no mistake about what Jesus means for his followers to do now. It requires knowing who Jesus Christ is before it is possible to find out how to follow him. It is as Dietrich Bonhoeffer stated in *The Cost of Discipleship*.

> We can only seek God when we know him already. How can you
> look for something or find it if you do not know what you are
> looking for? The disciples seek a God whom they have found in
> the promise they have received from Jesus.[153]

Once we learn who Jesus is and what he wants from us, then we can establish our own theological understanding of faith in Christ.

Theological understanding must include both faith and a set of beliefs pertaining to Christian Discipleship. Paul Tillich helps this discussion with his explanation in *Dynamics of Faith*.[154] He posited that there is a difference between the words faith and belief; and confusing the two things causes many interpretive problems in exercising faith. Beliefs, he contends are based upon evidence that is either sufficient or

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[153] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1959), 187-188.
[154] Tillich, 1-11.

insufficiently sound. Beliefs (regardless of their probability) can come from a trusted authority, or not.[155] They can have a rational or irrational basis for believing or not believing something. Tillich clarified that "faith is the state of being ultimately concerned."[156] He then uses the example of God being the ultimate concern for the Ancient Hebrews, or money being the ultimate concern or god for some people.[157] Christ then is the ultimate concern for Christians, if we purport to have faith (or become his Disciples). Faith then is a personal act of total and unconditional submission not based upon real or imagined evidence (or beliefs).[158]

Likewise, Karl Barth offers the thought in *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction* that: "Faith is a history, new every morning. It is no state or attribute. It should not be confused with mere capacity and willingness to believe."[159]

Therefore, if there is faith in Christ (and that he is God), that faith becomes the motivation to surrender to him and become his disciples. God commanded faith and insisted people cannot please God without it. Therefore becoming a disciple or follower of Jesus without a basis of faith in him would not yield real or genuine disciples. The reason this is important to grasp in the Theology of Discipleship is to know that Christ is the ultimate object of concern. Disciples were not sent to make other disciples for any

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[155] Ibid.

[156] Ibid., 1.

[157] Ibid. 1-11.

[158] Ibid., 21.

[159] Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1963), 103.

reason other than him, and there is nothing more important than Jesus Christ. If faith abounds, it centers the person in connection to Christ, who is the object of concern.

While there is information that can and should be offered to foster the faith of others; one cannot control actual results. The outcome of faith in response to Christ is lodged upon individual or collective group response; which informs individuals' *beliefs* about the Bible and theological ideas. Bonhoeffer noted disciples " . . . do not possess any rights or powers over others . . . the only way to reach others is through him in whose hands they are themselves like all other men."[160]

Once faith is solidified, the next important theological consideration is the actual beliefs about who Jesus is. He is the Son of God, The Son of Man, The Christ, and Savior. This becomes the information to offer those who are being discipled.

Regardless of efforts or perceptions of faith, it must be realize that faith can never be lodged upon self perceptions of personal goodness in service; but it is as Augustine mentioned in his analysis of Apostle Paul's discussion of it: "His [Paul's] last clause runs thus: 'I have kept the faith.' But he who says this is the same who declares in another passage, 'I have obtained mercy that I might be faithful.' . . . He does not say, 'I obtained mercy because I was faithful,' but 'in order that I might be faithful." [161]

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[160] Bonhoeffer, 187.

[161] Saint Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will*, Chapter 7, trans. Peter Holmes, http://www.logoslibrary.org/augustine/grace1/07.html. (accessed April 19, 2012).

What to Believe

The fact that Jesus was born, lived, and died as a human being who set the example to follow, begs the need to engage the complex topic of the *son of man*.[162] The research and perspectives of Walter Wink in *The Human Being: Jesus and the Enigma of the Son of Man*, explore the expression *the son of man (or son of the man)*. Wink points out that in his pre Easter experience, Jesus applied this expression to himself some eighty seven times in the New Testament Gospel text. The terminology is used in the Old Testament one hundred an eight times, including ninety-three incidents when God referred to Ezekiel.[163] In Ezekiel's case, Wink believes it simply meant a generic reference to *human being*. The position, he takes for Jesus, as the son of man, is belief in him being the archetypal (or model) human being. Jesus had all human attributes; but Jesus was the kind of human being, which all should become. The reason this theological understanding of the Son of Man is important to Discipleship is because it is the Human Jesus who set an example life to follow. Wink stated:

> It is this study's judgment that Jesus did indeed utter a number of the pre Easter son of the man sayings in the Gospels; that he expressed the core of the suffering sayings, in that he did anticipate his execution; and that he looked forward to the transformation of human beings into the fuller humanity exemplified and made possible by Jesus as the human being.[164]

This description helps refine more definitively what the response to Christian Discipleship ought to be. It requires a yielded attitude that follows the high standards of behavior and the example Jesus provided. To many people, there are interpretive

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[162] Myers, 962.

[163] Walter Wink, *The Human Being: Jesus and the Enigma of the Son of Man* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002),17.

[164] Ibid., 256.

disagreements with how to live up to the standard Jesus set. Most practitioners of Christianity would immediately perish the thought of actually selling all of their possessions to give the proceeds to the poor as a prerequisite to follow him. Likewise, it is also Christians who indulge proclivity to sin unabashedly, judge others without reservation; and then call the behavior *only human;* when in fact it is often inhumane. If one can fully grasp the notion of Jesus' archetypal humanity, it convicts and transforms the understanding of what it really means to be human, and a follower of Christ. Jesus then was the *real* human being.

Paradoxically, in order for Jesus to be the archetypal human being, or Son of Man, he is regarded foremost as the Son of God, born of a virgin. This was the way God provided a perfect human being. Additionally, this belief is augmented by the concept that he had a pre existence within the heavenly realm, and participated in the creation of humanity. Adoption of this set of beliefs assures Christ's disciples a complete understanding and acceptance of what Martin Luther called *communicatio idiomatum.*

> " . . . the idiomata of the two natures of Christ, the persons equally and totally. As a result, Christ is God and human being in one person . . . God created the world and is almighty, and the human being Christ is God; therefore, the human being Christ created the world and is almighty. The reason this is that since God and the human being have become one person, this person bears the idiomata of both natures in consequences."[165]

The Holy Spirit, the other person of the Trinity, was sent by him to address the needs of people when Jesus ascended to heaven. Further, it will be Jesus (the *idiomata*) who returns to judge those who are still alive and will be resurrected for admission into the glory of everlasting life with him, or rejected into eternal damnation. These are the

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[165] Martin Luther, "Critique of Nestorianism," In *The Christian Theology Reader,* ed. Alister E. McGrath (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1995), 152-153.

beliefs that emerged from years of idea formulation and theological dialogue, which

shaped The Apostles Creed,[166] traditions, and religious thought dating back to the

Council of Chalcedon in 451CE.[167]

Disciples of Christ functioning within today's context should form foundational

beliefs about whom, how, and why to respond to the Triune God. Bruce Demarest stated

in, *The Kingdom Life: A Practical Theology of Discipleship and Spiritual formation*, that

we however, do not respond to the Trinity, per se:

> Many Christians are theoretical Trinitarians but practical
> Unitarians. In our busy lives we don't think much about the
> Trinity, and often we don't experience the transforming life of the
> three-in-one God.[168]

He further explains a practical application in pursuit of goals for spiritual formation into

discipleship:

> The harmonious relations among the three persons of the Trinity
> offer a powerful model for imitation that advances the process of
> our spiritual formation. The Son embodies and reveals to us in
> human terms the perfections and works of God the Father. Each of
> the three persons of the Trinity exercises a primary function in the
> relation between people and the Godhead: the Father (Creator)
> originates the plan of salvation; the Son (Redeemer) provides the
> remedy for the blight of human sin; and the Spirit (Sanctifier)
> applies this salvation, growing new spiritual life. [169]

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[166] Cross and Livingstone, 89.

[167] Alister E. McGrath, ed., "The Chalcedonian Definition of the Christian Faith" in *The Christian Theology Reader* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1995), 148.

[168] Bill Thrall et al., eds., *The Kingdom Life: A Practical Theology of Discipleship and Spiritual Formation* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 2010), 225-226.

[169] Ibid., 231-232.

In striving to become Disciples of Christ, there must be connectedness and imitating the Trinity, which "exudes unconditional and unsurpassable love."[170]

Obedience and Compliance

Jesus selected and commanded certain people to follow him. Many followed without physically hearing him tell them to; but inwardly sensed a call to follow him. Some requested to follow him; but were either permitted or not allowed based upon preconditions he gave them. Upon his resurrection, Christ assumed Godly authority vested in him to issue commands to all who gathered to go forward from Galilee to make disciples. If faith is rested upon Christ, the same high degree of importance and quality of demand is still currently required.

Karl Barth stated in *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*:

It is splendid and beautiful to be assigned a duty by the God of the Gospel who is the object of evangelical theology, but it is also demanding, exalting, and finally terrifying. A *nobile officium*, a noble charge, is confided and entrusted to man; but this charge implies that he is expected to fulfill his ministry. He is privileged to do what is expected of him. But he also must do what he is chosen to do.[171]

Barth cautions us in *The Call to Discipleship* that we must, however carefully contextualize Christ's call to discipleship with fuller understanding:

But this does not mean that the living Son of Man is confined as it were to the sequence of his previous encounters, or that his commanding moves only in the circle of his previous commanding and the obedience it received.[172]

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[170] Ibid., 233.

[171] Barth, *Evangelical Theology,* 85.

[172] Karl Barth, *The Call to Discipleship* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press Facets, 2003), 68-69.

Barth is recommending that each person avail themselves to Christ's call to Discipleship in each unique life situation. He stated " . . . we have to hear his voice as he speaks to us, calling us in the particular situation of obedience determined by his word."[173] Thus, Barth contends what one does in response to the call to discipleship "will cause a break."[174] This would demonstrate to all a current or present obedience to Christ that would cause an obvious break from the past or world.[175]

It is important to add to this discussion, Wesleyan thought as a foundation for the Theology of Discipleship as it applies to Methodist practice. The influence of Wesleyan Arminian ideas greatly relies upon the leading of the Holy Spirit. This study supports the same understanding that Mildred Bangs Wynkoop discovered about the ideas of John Wesley:

> . . . since God requires holiness in men [people], he could not be content until his people experienced God's full saving grace. Men [people] needed to be faced with the crisis event that begins a life of spiritual victory.[176]

Without grasping the need to be converted and transformed by the Holy Spirit, the rest of the venture into Christian Discipleship would be disingenuous, or the convert's experience rather short lived.

Reflecting on and considering the whole of the Gospel texts, and evaluating what first century Christians and later Apologists, theologians and others did; helps each to understand one's own response and dedicated obedience to Christ. Such reflections,

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[173] Ibid., 69-70.

[174] Ibid.

[175] Ibid.

[176] Wynkoop, 4.

however, do not necessarily yield understanding of what one may be called by him to do under present circumstances. Christians must be willing to progress *with* God's calling while going forward. Churches often tend to be less responsive to the progressive call from God to gradually develop and grow in new directions. The fear of change and growth is often coupled with the fear of what costs will ensue as result of change. It becomes a fear of *what will I have to give of myself?*

From the perspective of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, following Christ is a matter of self denial.

> . . . Self denial means knowing only Christ, no longer knowing oneself. It means no longer seeing oneself, only him who is going ahead, no longer seeing the way, which is too difficult for us. Self denial says only: 'he is going ahead: hold fast to him.'[177]

Eric Metaxas indicated in *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* that Dietrich Bonhoeffer stated he could "see the dangers of his own Discipleship . . ."[178] According to Metaxas, what motivated Bonhoeffer's thinking and depth of compliance with Christian Discipleship was based upon his search for Christianity beyond his vast academic theological training.

While a student at Union Theological Seminary in New York, Bonhoeffer was appalled by the shallowness of theological discourse and with the churches he attended in New York. He had studied under the likes of Karl Barth and Adolph von Harnack in Germany. He was also disturbed by the racism he observed in America. It was only when he attended Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem along with an African American fellow

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[177] Wayen Whitson Floyd, Jr., ed., *Discipleship: Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 86.

[178] Eric Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 484.

seminarian, Albert Fisher, where he listened to the preaching of Adam Clayton Powell,

Sr., and heard Negro Spirituals, that he began to develop a different view of his own

religious experience. Metaxas noted, "Powell combined the fire of a revivalist preacher

with great intellect and social vision. He was active in combating racism and minced no

words about the saving power of Jesus Christ."[179]

When finally returning to Germany Bonhoeffer became a part of the resistance

movement against the maniacal rule of Adolf Hitler. His experience under Nazism placed

him in direct conflict with much of his own religious tradition, since he saw his nation

and church becoming not what he believed God intended. Bonhoeffer ended up locked

away in prison because he was a pacifist, which made him suspect. As the political

conditions worsened in German during World War I (especially after a failed attempt by

the resistance to assassinate Hitler), Bonhoeffer witnessed the horrors of prison,

concentration camps, and finally fell victim to execution. Before his life was taken, alone

with his own thoughts, he considered the *cost* for what following Christ would mean. He

wrote to his friend, Eberhard Bethge:

> . . . I'm still discovering right up to this moment, that it is only by
> living completely in this world that one learns to have faith . . . .
> By this-worldliness I mean living unreservedly in life's duties,
> problems, successes and failures, experiences and perplexities. In
> so doing we throw ourselves completely into the arms of God,
> taking seriously not our own sufferings, but those of God in the
> world—watching with Christ in Gethsemane . . . How can success
> make us arrogant, or failure lead us astray, when we share in God's
> sufferings through a life of this kind?[180]

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[179] Ibid., 108.

[180] Ibid., 484.

This deliberate discussion of how the theology of discipleship developed and applied in the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer provides a view of ideology surrounding what it means to follow Christ within one's own context. Such discipleship comes from an inward developing concept of God who is much greater than any religious tradition.

When Jesus told his followers to go and make disciples, it must have been with the intent that they would go into the world, with all of its dysfunction, to reach others and to represent him in service while bearing the cost. Therefore, not only must this idea of service be contemporized and contextualized, but its costs must also be clear in the minds of Christ's followers.

In an expansion of Bonhoeffer's thought, James Cone offered in *The Cross and The Lynching Tree* what this means for African Americans who must respond to discipleship while still bearing the cross of racism in the aftermath of slavery and Jim Crow laws. Throughout his book, Cone compares the dynamics of the cross of Jesus to the lynching of Blacks during the reconstruction era and later:

> Unfortunately, during the course of 2,000 years of Christian history, this symbol of salvation has been detached from any reference to the ongoing suffering and oppression of human beings—those whom Ignacio Ellacuría, the Salvadoran martyr, called "the crucified peoples of history." The cross has been transformed into a harmless, non-offensive ornament that Christians wear around their necks. Rather than reminding us of the "cost of discipleship," it has become a form of "cheap grace," an easy way to salvation that doesn't force us to confront the power of Christ's message and mission. Until we can see the cross and the lynching tree together, until we can identify Christ with a "recrucified" black body hanging from a lynching tree, there can be no genuine understanding of Christian identity in America, and no deliverance from the brutal legacy of slavery and white supremacy.[181]

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[181] James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), xiv.

Cone explains that so much of what the Black Church has become requires this consideration:

> The claim that whites had the right to control the black population
> through lynching and other extralegal forms of mob violence was
> grounded in the religious belief that America is a white nation
> called by God to bear witness to the superiority of "white over
> black."[182]

This is a summation of what has flavored all areas of black life, real and imagined. As hideous as the act of lynching is, its source *is* racism which spilled forward into denied access to employment, education, housing, urban blight, public accommodation, and everyday freedoms in America. In attempting to regenerate a model of discipleship within a traditional African American Church setting, one is reminded of how rejecting racism helped to inform theological perspectives of a God who suffers with the oppressed, and could never be pleased with oppression of any kind.

Vincent Wimbush in *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1980-1992,* explains that theological persuasion is presented more in our current era through the lens of evangelical white interpretation of both history and theology.

> The irony of the situation is that what now comes when blacks
> have freedom to formulate and pursue their own agenda is more
> slavery: more control from without through the transmission of
> authoritative ideas . . . whites are capturing the minds of black
> people through black acceptance of white views and interpretations
> of decades of progress and liberation.[183]

Wimbush presented this thought as a critique of "big business evangelists and miracle workers, through electronic preachers and teachers, through the prolific writers of

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[182] Ibid., 7.

[183] Vincent Wimbush, *Black Theology: A Documentary History, Volume Two: 1980-1992* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 213.

spiritual 'how to' books . . . "[184] He is referring to white evangelical perspectives that have managed to strategically capture control of the theological discussion, often using African American preachers and teachers to convey this perspective within the Black Church.

The argument could also be made that real theology can and should only be done in the crucible of human experience and interaction with God. Discipleship itself carries with it a mantra of freedom from oppression. Jesus commissioned his disciples to go forward into a diverse world of all people to bring the liberating nature of his salvation and teachings to those who would become disciples. It includes the practical response to this world as well as an eternal world. Jesus did not limit his expectations based upon cultural climate or social location. The Theology of Discipleship *lifts the expectation* for behavioral response along with faith and beliefs about Jesus who is the object of concern.

The fact that many Western evangelical theological constructs were used as foundational to the doctrines of the Christian church, does not reduce the need for Christian Discipleship from all churches regardless of the breadth of diversity.

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[184] Ibid.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

I believe it is my greatest honor and happiness to be Thy disciple;
how miserable and blind are those that live without God in the
world . . .

> —Rt. Rev. Richard Allen, *The Life
> Experience and Gospel Labors of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen*

Hypothesis

The hypothesis was that if Bethel could accurately characterize its current

condition in response to the requirements of discipleship, and could implement a

regenerated model which interconnects Strategic Planning, Mission, Evangelism and

Christian Education, then Bethel's commitment to *be disciples* would be improved; and

its performance in *making disciples* will be refocused and redirected.

Treatment

The African Methodist Episcopal Church lists *Christian Discipleship* as its first

stated objective in support of its mission "to minister to the social, spiritual, and physical

development of all people."[1]

> In order to meet the needs of every level of the Connection and in every
> local church, the AME Church shall implement strategies to train all
> members in: (1) Christian discipleship, (2) Christian leadership, (3)
> current teaching methods and materials, (4) the history and significance of

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[1]AMEC, *Book of Discipline*, 16.

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the AME Church, (5) God's biblical principles, and (6) social development to which all should be applied to daily living.[2]

This objective is in keeping with Christ's commissioning of his followers to go make disciples. Since Bethel was observed at the outset of the project without a process in place to guide its existing programs and potential for successful compliance with Christ's or the AMEC requirements; the treatment based upon the hypothesis was to develop a process for guiding Bethel's improvement in discipleship.

The first objective of this project was to identify causes and contributing factors that prevented an effective response to become and make disciples. The second was to consider applied research and collaborative efforts for the pastor and the congregation to use in overcoming obstacles and building a measurable model to transform Bethel into faithful and effective deliverers of Christian Discipleship.

Description of Ministry Project

The Context Team

A Bethel context team of ten *disciples* plus the pastor was established. It included the Youth Pastor, Evangelist, Steward Pro Tem, Trustee Pro Tem, Lay President, Director of Christian Education, Church Office Manager, Assistant Sunday School Superintendant, and representatives from the Steward Board, Class Leaders, Women's Missionary Society, Son's of Allen Men's Ministry, choirs, and Hospitality Committee. Each member of the context team serves in two or more of the aforementioned positions in the church.

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[2] Ibid.

Several of these persons have significant community or professional involvement within Middletown. Their roles are Health Commissioner, Second Ward City Council person, local news Journalist and editor, TV talk show hosts, NAACP officers, United Way officer, and program manager for a parent resource center. Because of these connections, it helped to provide more insight regarding the community.

According to *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*, Nancy Ammerman noted that, "congregations create their own culture."[3] Bethel is a family culture. Therefore, when thinking of a regenerative model that required collaboration for implementation, it was necessary to assure that several families were represented as participants of the context team. This was done so that positive communications would permeate about the purpose for this project and for encouraging support throughout the congregation.

Regenerated Model of Christian Discipleship

This project proposed and implemented a two part *Regenerated Discipleship Model* to lead the congregation towards greater effectiveness. The first part of this model is The Discipleship Development Model. This model provides an assessment tool that is designed to be used annually (or as necessary) to evaluate performance and commitment of each church member in regards to a composite view of the whole church.

The second part of this model is an integrated intervention process of Strategic Planning, Mission, Evangelism, and Christian Education. These are four broader categories (tools) within which all church activities would be placed (now and in the

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[3] Nancy T. Ammerman, et.al. eds., *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1998), 84.

future). The process is called *integrated* because many programs and activities will tend to overlap (or mix) into one or more categories depending upon intended use and effect. It is *interactive* because it influences the people and processes it was designed for; and can be changed according to the needs of people and effectiveness of programs and activities.

The Discipleship Development Model

The Discipleship Development Model depicted in Figure 3 is a Euler Diagram.[4] It shows the interrelationship of three contained circles. A first look may suggest that A+B = C. While that is true, it is not the whole story. Actually, all of A [Becoming Disciples (Inquiry)] is really a sub part of B [Making Disciples, (Collaboration)]. Obviously B has something more than is present in A. That separate part of B (beyond A) is where the *Great Commission of Jesus* for going forward to make other disciples is located.

In Circle A, growth and development pertaining to personal acceptance of Christ as the object of concern and *inquiry* about life and faith begins. Inquiry suggests interests, questions, curiosity, and careful attention. It is this inquiry which motivates development in a positive direction. For purposes of this model, the use of the term *inquiry* was adapted from Cooperrider and Sekerka's model[5] of "positive change of inquiry into the *appreciable world*" as previously presented in Chapter 2. (See Figure 1, Chapter 2).

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[4] "Euler Diagrams are named for Leonhard Euler, an 18th century mathematician, adopted closed curves to illustrate syllogistic reasoning." Sun Joo Chin and Oliver Lemon, "Diagrams," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/diagrams/ (accessed April 27, 2012).

[5] Cooperrider and Sekerka, *Organization Development*, 232.

Circle B incorporates the necessary *collaboration* for Bethel to move culturally into the realm of disciple making. The area of C (which is inclusive of A+B, but beyond it) is the outcome of missional growth, expansion, and God's blessing upon the work accomplished by following Christ and the collaborative work done in B. The result in C is the *Synergy* of Christian Discipleship that shows even greater yield through the help and blessings of God.

The researcher used a simple color illustration to explain the concepts. The location of groups within the congregation is represented by a small circle A (which is yellow) in the diagram. The rest of the circle B is blue, and the larger containing circle is green (which is a result of mixing blue and yellow together) resulting from collaboration of yellow and blue. Green, as a secondary color, represents synergy. In order to determine where disciples are located on the diagram, there is a need to determine what happens in each phase of development, and what performance is expected to progress through these levels towards discipleship.
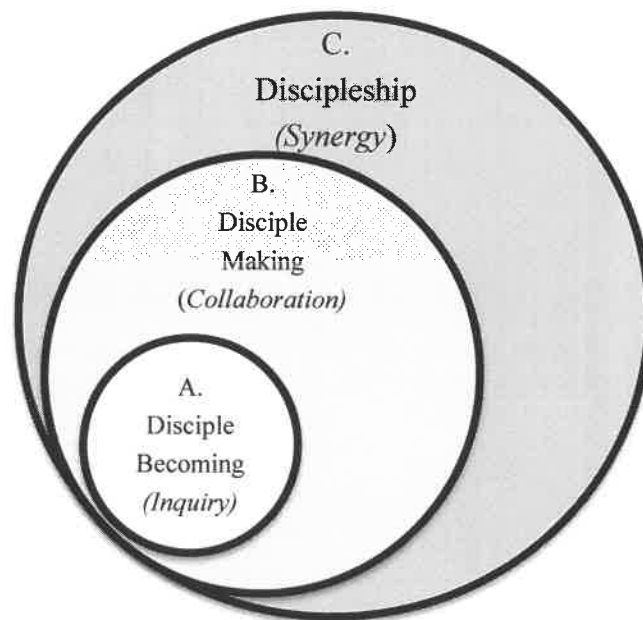
Figure 3. Euler Diagram: Discipleship Development Model

Phase A. Becoming Disciples: Inquiry

There are three stages of development in *inquiry* as disciples learn and grow. A more detailed view of *Phase A. Becoming Disciples*, explains what happens in each. The first two stages are familiar in AME tradition: Conversion[6] and Accession.[7] The third stage, *integration* was introduced by this project. These stages of development are represented by dots of progression along a rising arrow which points towards the next phases (B and C). (Figure 4.)

A. Becoming Disciples
(Inquiry)

Stage 3
Integration

Stage 2
Accession

Stage 1
Conversion
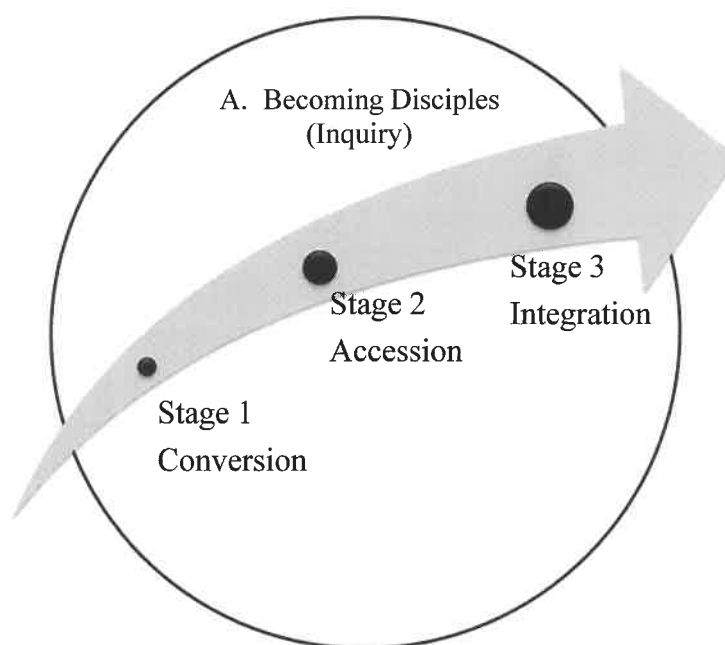
Figure 4. Phase A. Becoming Disciples: Inquiry

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[6] , "A convert is a person who confesses that he or she is a sinner and accepts the grace of God by faith to his or her soul's redemption. . . ."AMEC, *The Book of Discipline* , 673.

[7] "Accession: The act of a person who unites with a congregation after meeting all requirements necessary for full membership." Ibid., 670.

Stage 1 *Conversion* is the entry stage of *inquiry* into the requirements of Christianity. It is represented by the smallest dot on Figure 4. A converted disciple is a person who is coming to Christ for the first time, or from another faith tradition. If a convert has never received baptism, then baptism is performed as a sign of their inner conversion or salvation. In no case are persons ever re baptized. Children and infants are baptized as a sign of responsibility placed upon the parents and the church to assure that, as preparatory members, they are trained and developed until they reach an age to accept full responsibility for themselves.

New converts are vulnerable to discouragement if the church does not warmly receive them, and nurture their growth throughout the stage of conversion. All new converts are placed under a Class Leader[8] for mentorship. New converts are provided new member studies with the pastor; and after a period (usually ninety days) of preparation are moved to the next stage of accession.

Stage 2. *Accession* is depicted by the second dot in the circle. At this stage the disciple takes vows of membership, receives access to full participation, and continues within their class for mentoring to guide their growth as they become involved in the church. Persons at this level may experience enthusiasm and dedication, but are still finding their way into the mainstream of the church body.

The pastor and context team have observed that spiritual health must be nurtured at this important stage of disciple development until the strength of conviction is established. Until group formation dynamics are settled in regards to a person at Stage 2. Accession, they are vulnerable to how the congregation and outside world sees and responds to their life as a Christian and member of Bethel. If this is not monitored and

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[8] Ibid., 71.

appropriate mentorship and training given and received, they may not fully integrate past this stage. This accounts for why some members tend to become inactive, less dedicated in regular worship attendance, and demonstrate less commitment in general to Christian responsibility and the church. It is possible and observable for some church members to remain in A2 for life.

Stage 3 *Integration* is represented by the third dot on the arrow. While integration is not an AMEC classification of membership, this project introduces it to explain the significance for congregational characterization purposes. Integration occurs when the disciple demonstrates growth and service at a higher quality of performance and faithful response. These individuals express more interest in being obedient to Christ, accepting responsibility, and holding themselves accountable for the cost and requirements of service. If the integration stage is not carefully managed, or if the right model of discipleship is not presented before them, they may tend to limit their own growth instead of allowing themselves even greater accomplishment through their gifts and graces.

It is important to explain in regards to Phase A3, that even the most mature and dedicated disciples, can be expected to move back and forth between A3 and B. It becomes problematic when there is no movement into Phase B from A3 at all. When church membership is congested predominately and permanently at A3, there are no new disciples (or converts) being made by the church. There is also, nothing being done to prepare the congregation to receive new disciples and train them. It is also observable and possible for members in A3 to shift backward into A2. Lifestyle changes, problems, discouragement about the church, fractured egos, and church conflict are all causal

factors for some or many members of the congregation to take a step backward or even leave the church.

Phase B. Disciple Making: Collaboration

It is not until entry into *Phase B. Disciple Making* that disciples are actually responding to the work of the great commission. *Inquiry* will still continue based upon needs for development and growth. This explains why the graphic of the model shows Phase A as an included element of Phase B. The "going to make disciples" is the portion not included in Phase A, but members will expand themselves into this area as they grow. Figure 5, illustrates what is expected in the greater portion of Phase B.

B. Disciple Making
(Collaboration)

Go
Make
Disciples

Baptize
them
In the name
Of Father,
Son, and
Holy Spirit

Teach
them to
obey all that
I have
commanded
you

Know
I am with
you until
the end
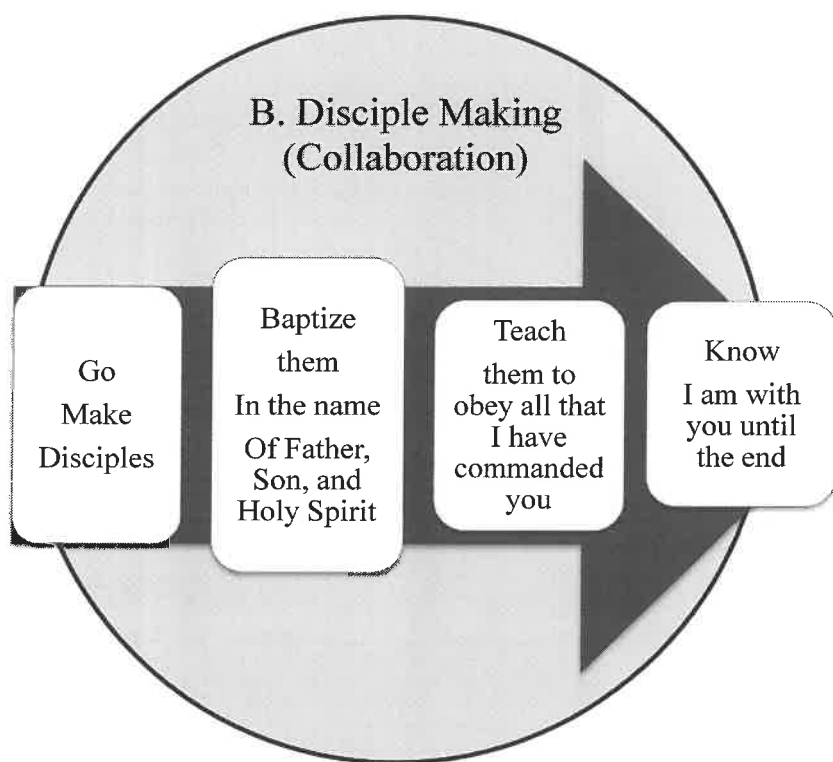
Figure 5. Disciple Making: Collaboration

It is based upon Jesus' directives in the great commission, and includes the flow of steps which he presented in Matthew 28:19 and 20. In order to comply, the church must collaborate internally and within the community where it reaches out to make disciples.

As Christ sent his followers to go make others become what he had engendered in them, this commission was based upon an important assumption. Namely, that the *prerequisite* was fulfilled for *being or becoming* disciples (implicit in step 3 "all that I have commanded you"). That same assumption is still a factor before taking the first step in following Jesus' flow chart appearing in Phase B.

Therefore, both Phase A and Phase B are required in order to accomplish the overall result or synergy to be realized in Phase C. In reviewing each step, it is revealed that the fourth step of *knowing* that the Lord is present throughout indicates that the process must continue until Christ says to stop, and that he is there to assure synergistic response to the process.

Phase C. Discipleship: Synergy

Synergy is a concept meaning the sum is greater than its parts. What makes discipleship synergistic (as shown in Figure 6. Phase C. Discipleship: Synergy) is the result of what happens during the combining of phases A and B. The additive, which fills in the wholeness of C, is from God. This further clarifies why Jesus said that there was a need to *know* he would guide and further assure continuation of the process: "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Mt.20b)
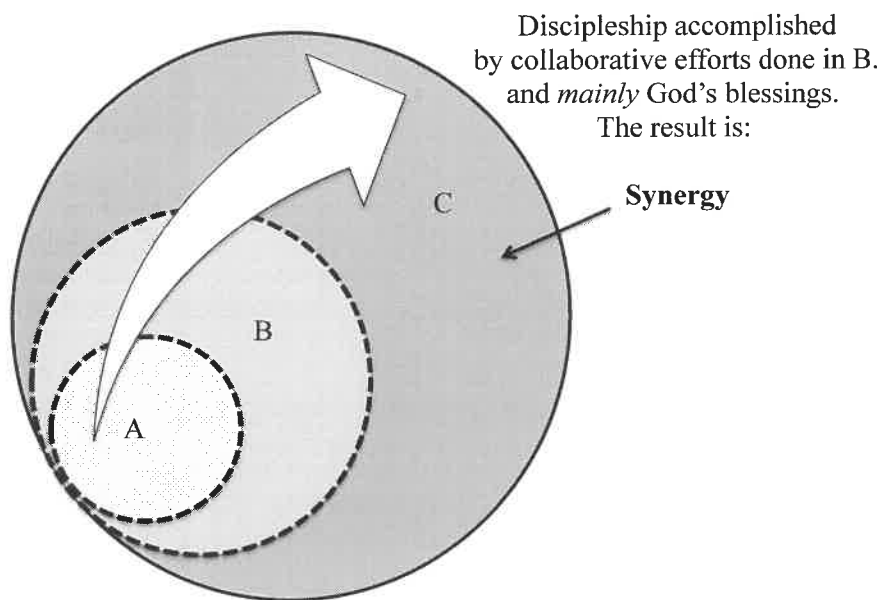
Figure 6. Phase C. Discipleship: Synergy

Blessings of genuine internal and external growth are brought about by following

Christ in faithful dedication. Without becoming and making disciples, there would be

nothing for the Lord to bless regarding this process. His presence assures the right kind of

blessings at the right time. The job of the church is to assure that people are prepared and

engaged to work in Phase B [(while they continue in the process of development within

stages of A (Inquiry)].

Discipleship Characterization

It was important to first determine clear and observable characteristics to help

interpret levels of development before the context team evaluated the whole

congregation. This was necessary in order to determine which performance and response

characteristics would appear on the pre-determined Discipleship Development Model in

Phases A, B, or C. The team determined traits, behaviors, and actions on a Characteristic

Review Guide (Appendix A. Characteristic Review Guide). They added identifiable traits

(*or pros*)on the guide table, and the threats, and necessary preventive interventions for

each phase and stage to help evaluate needs for development and to identify potential

problems.

The Regenerated Process of Discipleship

After designing the Discipleship Development Model, the process for

regeneration included an integration of the *tools* of Strategic Planning, Mission,

Evangelism, and Christian Education. The goal of this project was; to put initial

interventions in place to implement the process, then to collaboratively evaluate results,

and to help prescribe future modifications for rendering better results in developing the

church.

The full model for regeneration is depicted in Figure 7. It shows a moving *circle*

of influence that includes programs and activities requiring: Strategic Planning, Mission,

Evangelism and Christian Education. The functionality of this process is to assist the

Pastor, Ministry staff, Stewards, Christian educators, and Class Leaders in determining

ways to motivate and develop disciples based upon needs represented in their current

phase of development.
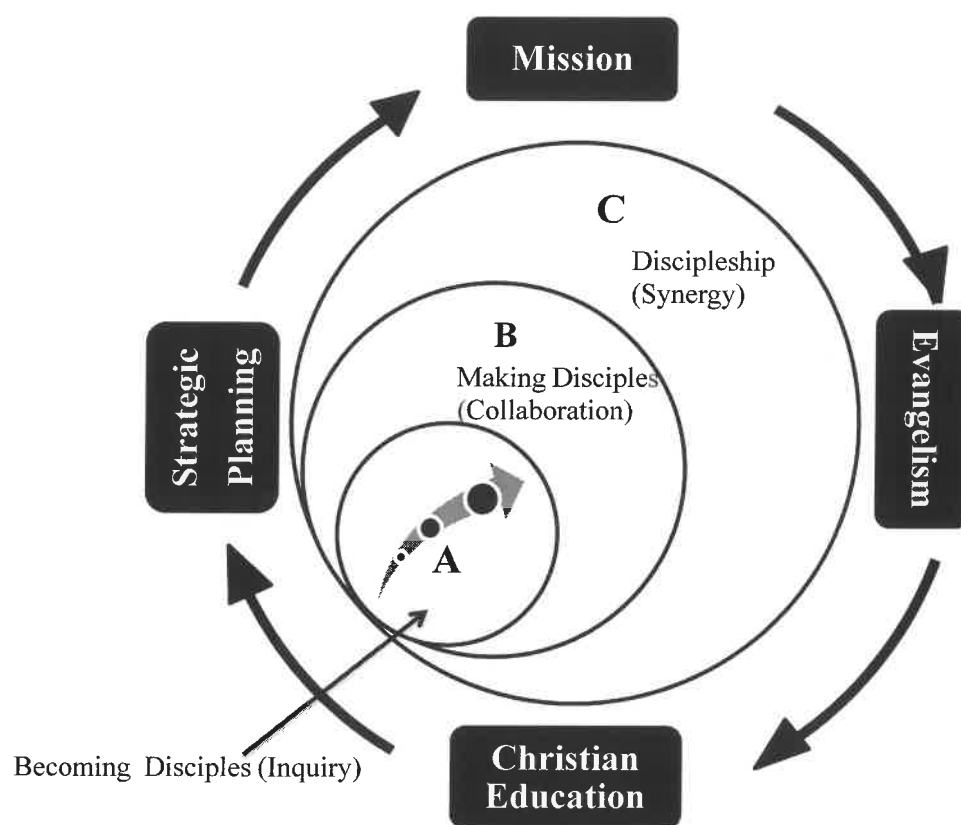
Figure 7. Regenerated Model of Christian Discipleship

The Integrated Process Model

Strategic Planning

Strategic Planning is defined by Jeffrey and Lynda Russell as; "creating a strategy for achieving the organization's goals and then devising an organized method to accomplish this strategy."[9] It is this simple definition that appropriately defines how strategic planning was applied for this project model.

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[9] Russell and Russell, 10.

As previously mentioned, all the tools are integrated and are used in some combination depending upon their purpose for discipleship. The most integrated tool used for the project model was *strategic planning*, since it helped to both form the process and to manage the activity or program. A point of clarification is that this was not intended to be a stringent or purist application of strategic planning. Rather, it was a way to organize the ideas, thoughts, and work of the context team in order to facilitate next steps and to plan for the future. Also, in no way was strategic planning recommended to replace Divine guidance or the need for prayer. Divine guidance, the researcher believes, is what led to the initial vision of "Disciples Engaged in Christ's Service."

What strategic planning does ensure is a way to develop and choose strategies or approaches in support of the overall mission to enact the discipleship requirements stated by Christ in the great commission of Matthew 28. Since The AME Church has a formalized strategy to respond to this requirement, it follows that Bethel should do likewise; using strategic concepts to assist programmatic implementation of this project, and to manage individual thinking and synthesis for group consensus.

The pastor and context team completed three strategic planning sessions to regenerate a model for Bethel's discipleship. Techniques used to discuss strategy included brainstorming and problem analysis. In Strategic Planning Session I, a potential problem analysis included evaluation of poor and sporadic attendance at worship and Bible study. These inadequate attendance patterns were examined because they made it difficult to prepare the congregation for discipleship. The lack of fuller congregational availability lessened the opportunities for engaged discussion and stifled development. This pattern suggested that a significant portion of the congregation was mainly

interested in the entertainment value of worship when they felt like coming. Therefore, the pastor expressed the limitations of getting information to the majority of people in order to stimulate their growth in discipleship.

An idea presented by the Director of Christian Education was for the pastor to provide Bible Study Guides to accompany the Sunday sermon. This would serve as the preparation and guide for the discussion and teaching that occurred at the mid week Bible Study. The group evaluated the idea that members of the congregation who were either unable or unwilling to attend Bible study would receive the information for their own personal use after Sunday worship. The intent was that overall learning would be enhanced for everyone who took a copy of the Study Guide home with them. The church deliberately made forty copies in order to track how many were being used.

In Strategic Planning Session II, a Balanced Score Card [10] was designed to review which stakeholders of Bethel would have greatest interest in the effectiveness of discipleship. This was a way to evaluate the pastor's and context team's understanding of both the internal and external environment and culture of the church; and to self assess their own inquiry about the collaborative progress of disciple making at Bethel in mid March of 2012.

Additionally, a SWOT Analysis (SWOT is an acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats)[11] was used for self assessing Bethel's current status and potential for meeting the requirements of discipleship in regenerating a model.

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[10] Robert S. Kaplan and Dave P. Norton, *The Balanced Scorecard: Translating Strategy* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), 9.

[11] "The SWOT framework was first described in detail in the late 1960's by Edmund P. Learned, C. Roland Christiansen, Kenneth Andrews, and William D. Guth in *Business Policy, Text and Cases* (Irwin, 1969)." "SWOT Analysis," *ProvenModels*, http://www.provenmodels.com/37/swot-analysis/c.-roland-christensen--edmund-p.-learned--kenneth-r.-andrews--william-d.-guth/ (accessed April 24, 2012).

This was followed by action planning to discover which interventions would likely provide more success. Higher level process integration mapping was prepared for the Discipleship Sermon Series, Bible Study, and Youth Church as examples of what could be done for all other programs and activities.

The introduction of Youth Church was an initiative included in the proposal of this project to assure that the youth of Bethel would be included in the overall development using educational and spiritual development approaches applicable to the youth. A youth pastor (a member of the context team) was appointed to lead this effort.

Examples of how the specific interventions and activities relative to this project were mapped and designed to work are depicted in the Figures 8 through 10.
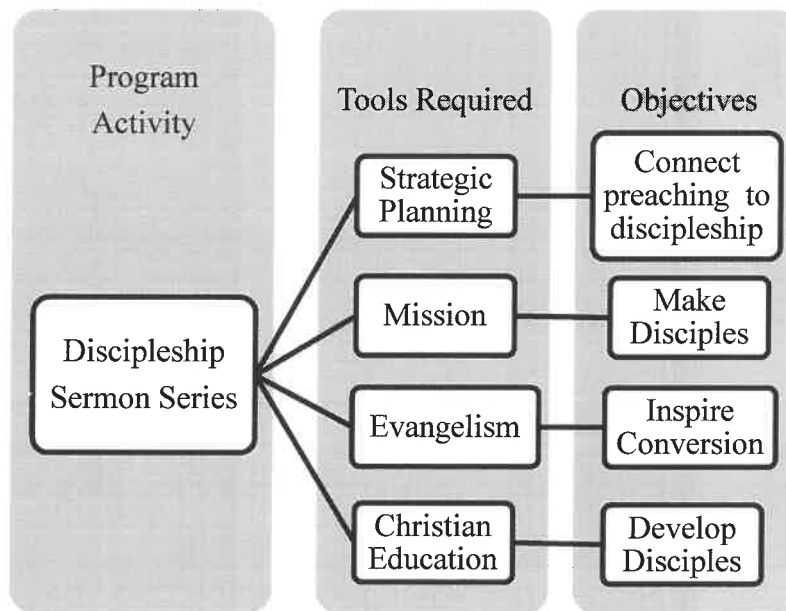
Figure 8. Process Interaction of Discipleship Sermon Series
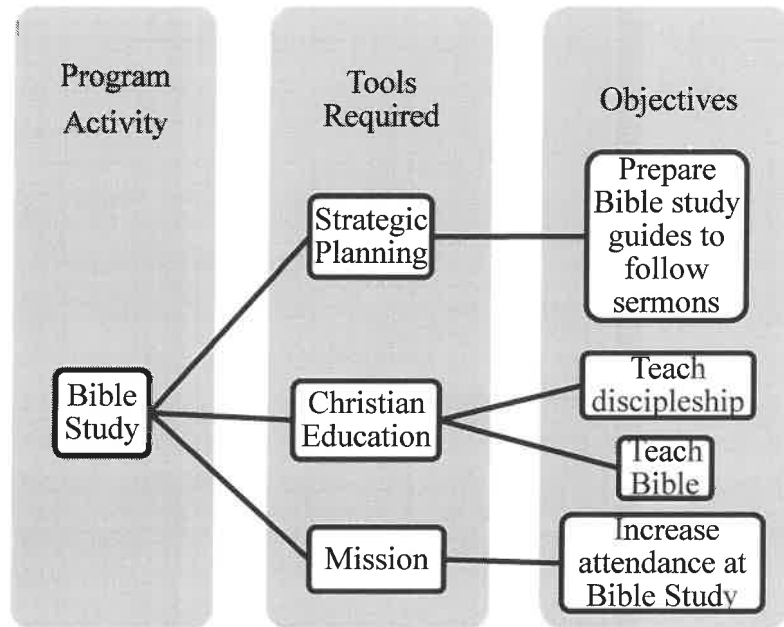
Figure 9. Process Interaction of Discipleship Bible Study Guides
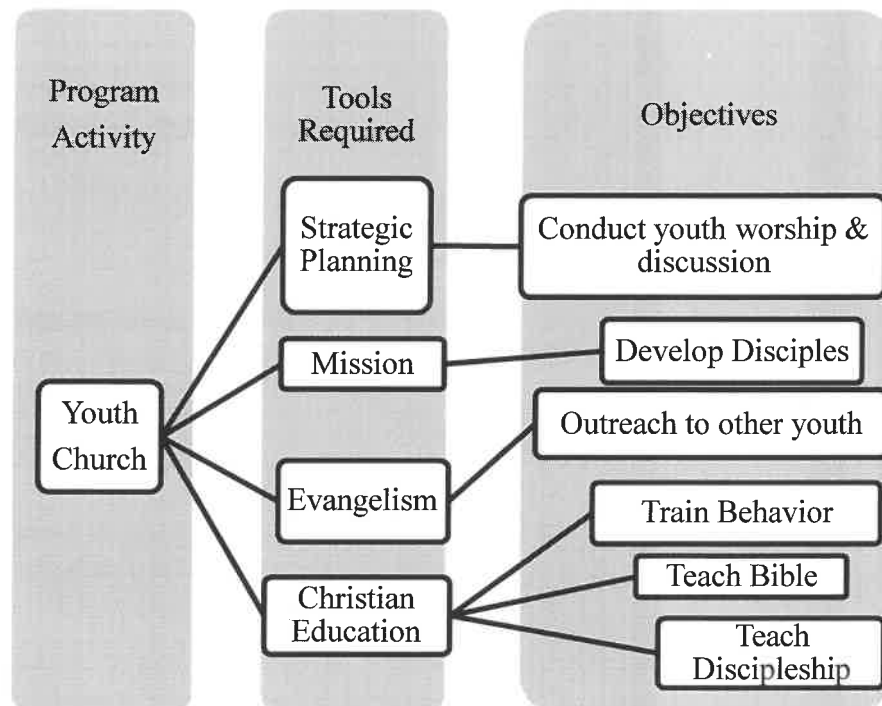
Figure 10. Process Interaction of Youth Church

In the third Strategic Planning session, the team performed an internal evaluation to characterize the entire membership of Bethel based upon the Discipleship Development Model.

Mission

The key feature of this project was to engender and refocus the church upon the commission of Christ to "go and make disciples." Mission is considered the tool for programming the direction or featured agenda of all activities and ideas. Since Bethel already had processes in place, it was important to see if and where their connection could be made to the mission of discipleship. The rationale was to intentionally create the connection (if one could be made), or to eventually modify or eliminate the program or activity. Focusing on Bethel's vision and the missional thrust forward, the context team and pastor set out to design Bethel's missional infrastructure based on the discipleship requirements of Christ and of the AME Church.

The AME Church has already listed how its architecture or infrastructure supports this requirement. Since 2009, Bethel had maintained the vision statement of "Disciples Engaged in Christ's Service." Bethel then put in place (from context strategy sessions) the stated mission of: " Bethel AME Church is engaged in teaching people about Jesus through witness, word, and works to build God's Kingdom."

Evangelism

Since the predominance of observed attendance for worship was already members of Bethel, the Christian Discipleship Sermon series with accompanying study guides included an evangelistic theme of inward development towards discipleship. Sermons were either prepared with a thematic of "The Cost of Discipleship" or "Becoming Disciples."

Additionally, an Evangelist was licensed and appointed for Gospel outreach. This was a new formalized ministry included to undergird the mission of discipleship. The pastor and evangelist have established development goals for the position to help the church become accustomed to the notion of the outreaching effect of witnessing to others about the Gospel. The evangelist's role is, by design, an unordained position; not specific to pulpit preaching or church pastoral ministry, but includes personal one on one teaching, witnessing, and connecting with persons about salvation through Jesus Christ. The evangelist position helps model enthusiasm and exhibits ways that lay persons in general might proceed in discipleship.

Christian Education

The prepared Bible studies that accompanied the Discipleship Sermon series provided an opportunity for all members and visitors to take a hard copy study guide with them after the worship service to prepare for mid week Bible study. For those persons who did not attend the study, the goal was to afford wider exposure to content of the materials being covered. (see Appendix B. Matrix of Discipleship Sermon Series, Study Guides and Example Set). Four members of the collaborative leadership team

participated in helping to conduct these studies as a means of their own development in shared learning about discipleship.

Youth Church was established on May 6, 2012 for all youth in attendance between the ages of twelve through eighteen. Youth are now dismissed from regular worship one Sunday per month to provide an opportunity for them to conduct their own praise and worship in another area of the church. It affords them time to study and focus on goals that encourage commitment to discipleship based on their own contextual experiences. A youth pastor was assigned to support this endeavor. The Youth Pastor is a licensed preacher working towards goals of ordination and fulfilling seminary requirements for a Master's in Divinity degree. He also serves as a positive role model for the youth of Bethel.

Since Class Leaders have a pivotal role in mentoring members towards development in discipleship, the pastor prepared and provided specific training for Class Leaders. The AMEC Discipline defines the organization of classes and designates their purpose as: "A class is formed to discern whether its members are indeed working out their own salvation and to receive what they contribute to the support of the Gospel."[12]

Methodology

The regenerated model as previously described was prepared for implementation. It was designed with the capability for guiding usage and results. A qualitative approach was used to gather data about Bethel's demographics, and about member's understanding of the nature of Christian Discipleship. Additional applied research and US Census data

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[12]AMEC, *Book of Discipline,* 71.

were consulted to extrapolate Bethel's current and potential opportunities for disciple making.

The methodology used included multiple sources of internal data about Bethel's status and compliance, and about the progress of the whole congregation pertaining to discipleship. Data collection included attendance records, responses, observations and opinions. These were compiled based upon the subject of discipleship and commitment patterns. Demonstrated levels of integration and performance were evaluated for the current roster of two hundred and two members in order to help determine ways to develop the congregation for disciple making in the future. Several strategic planning techniques were used to organize thoughts, ideas, and activities for analysis in the model.

Measurement

The Discipleship Development model was designed to characterize Bethel's current behavior and response to discipleship. This model, as depicted by (Fig. 4), was used to generate evaluation of every member of Bethel to determine their stages of development toward *becoming* disciples, or of sustained performance in disciple making. This step included preparation of an updated membership roster of the church as of May 12, 2012. The roster included all two hundred and two members who were adults and preparatory members under the age of eighteen.

This was a performance measurement to be repeated after interventions (including the sermon series with study guides) were in place for eight months. The pastor and team established and listed traits, behaviors and actions according to the Characteristic Review Guide (Appendix A). A detailed spreadsheet was prepared for listing each member and

capturing levels of observed performance. Totals were then calculated to produce overall congregational representation in Phases A, B, or C.

Individual personal issues were not taken into consideration at this point due to the extreme range and nature of such situations and matters. The goal was to see who was active, inactive, out of town or shut in, as they currently appeared within the respective levels represented by the measurement tool.

Instrumentation

A total of three surveys were administered to Bethel's currently active congregation. Bethel Surveys I and II were designed for additional characterization of the adult members (those over the age of eighteen). The purpose was to capture data about demographics, the distance members lived from the church location, their perceptions and frequency of worship, response to Christian Education, participation levels, habits regarding inviting others to worship with them, and their understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Christ and a full member of Bethel.

A final survey at the end of this project was used as a post test of member understanding and perspectives of their own growth compared to what actual improvements could be observed. This survey was designed to provide evaluative guidance for future interventions.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

John Creswell in *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mix Methods Approaches,* stated that:

> Qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants. They may use a protocol - an instrument for collecting data - but the researchers are the ones who actually gather the information.[1]

Using this approach for the project, the researcher observed that Bethel's primary process for making new disciples was to wait for someone (usually a visitor) to attend worship and then decide to walk down the aisle during the time of *Invitation to Christian Discipleship.* Although the appeal made during the invitation was to become a disciple of Christ, most visitors perceived it as an invitation to join Bethel specifically. This method assumes there are people who are seeking a church to join. Over the course of the last twenty five years, it has not proven to be particularly effective for making *new disciples* at Bethel since unexpected visitors at worship services are scarce. Visitors are usually out of town guests or relatives of members, or they already belong to another church.

The second method was to baptize and rear children up as preparatory members, and then transition them to adult membership without an intentional recognition of an open confession of faith as they entered adulthood. In some cases, there was open

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[1] John Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mix Methods Approaches, 3rd. Ed.* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing, 2009), 175.

profession of faith, but in some situations no records existed and no one remembers when or if they ever took vows of full membership.

Data Collection

Bethel Membership

Bethel's annual membership levels, from January 2010 to May of 2012, are displayed in Table 1. During this period of time, there was an increase of twenty five (twelve adults and thirteen children). All of the children were reared in Bethel and eight of the adults were former members who had been absent from any church for many years but returned to Bethel. Two adults transferred their memberships into Bethel from different local AMEC congregations in other cities. One adult was converted, baptized and accessed full membership, but had been reared as a child at Bethel. One adult was converted, baptized, and joined the church without having any previous membership experience with Bethel or another AME church. Based upon these total results, twenty four (96%) of the increase in membership was as a result of previous experience at Bethel or another AME affiliation.

During this same time period, one person moved to another state and transferred their membership to the AME Church there. Thirteen members died. Table 1. depicts the overall net increase of 11 to the congregation beginning from November of 2009 with one hundred and ninety one members until May of 2012.

Table 1. Bethel Membership Level Changes (November 2009 through May 2012)

Membership Levels	2010	2011	2012
Adult Increase	4	4	2
Adult Transfers in	2	0	0
Youth Increase	3	3	7
Youth Transfers in	0	0	0
Total Increase	9	7	9
Adult Deaths	6	4	3
Youth Deaths	0	0	0
Adult Transfers Out	1	0	0
Left Church	0	0	0
Total Decrease	7	4	3
Net Result	2	3	6
Membership Level	193	196	202

Membership and Viability

William R. Hoyt, in *Effectiveness by The Numbers,* notes that: "Growth in worship attendance means people are being reached and attracted to the church."[2] He adds: "The more outward focused the church, the more new people will materialize."[3] Hoyt states that: "Market Share is the Base Worship Attendance divided by the number of people living in your geographic parish area."[4] Hoyt also suggests that attendance effectiveness is comparable to a church's penetration within its parish area.

Using Hoyt's formula to evaluate Bethel's average (or base) attendance of 112 per week in respect to its local market share of 84,776 [5] (Middletown and the surrounding communities of Franklin, Monroe, and Trenton) suggests that Bethel has only .132 % of the total share. What Hoyt's method does not take into account are those in the parish

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[2] Hoyt, 24.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., 103.

[5] US Census, http://www.census.gov/ (accessed May 22, 2012).

market who may be part of another church somewhere already. To add more balance to this assessment of attendance and the potential discipleship into the penetration area; it was helpful to consider percentages of unchurched adults compared with the churched. George Barna's research reported that the "The total proportion of unchurched adults has hovered in the 28 to 34 percent range for the past fifteen years."[6] This is an important consideration because the goal of discipleship should be based upon new converts, not proselytizing those who are already affiliated with another church or Christian faith tradition.

In *Stealing Sheep: The Church's Hidden Problems with Transfer Growth,* William Chadwick proposed the following conundrum:

> When we become disciples of Christ, we join the church universal
> . . . Christians — especially Protestants—frequently say their
> allegiance and responsibility belong to Christ. So if they move
> around a bit from church to church but remain faithful to the Lord,
> can the concept of stealing really be applied?[7]

Chadwick contends that: "the term stealing becomes more appropriate as we carefully consider the functional nature of the church. When we understand the genius of the body of Christ and the important role of membership fidelity in maturing and prospering the church."[8]

The researcher for this project agrees with Chadwick. Pastors and members who solicit and recruit from other churches are in essence stealing from a Godly arrangement. Making disciples for Christ is an urgent and important goal of the church, and requires

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[6] Barna, *Futurecast,* 158.

[7] William Chadwick, *Stealing Sheep: The Church's Hidden Problems with Transfer Growth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 34.

[8] Ibid., 35.

commitment in response. Disruptions in the fidelity of membership creates delays and problems in reaching goals and demonstrating the kind of love and camaraderie Christ required his disciples to have for one another. While there are valid reasons for changing church membership (such as relocations, family situations, and genuine doctrinal disagreement); moving from one church to another because of personal choice and preference actually encourages disloyalty and creates an elevation of unrealistic expectations for churches in general.

The AME Church's estimated viability level for Bethel is 442 members based upon location, economic factors, and accessible population. This estimate is 240 members more than the membership roll as of May 12, 2012. In extrapolating Barna's percentage estimates of unchurched onto Middletown and the bordering cities of Franklin, Monroe, and Trenton, and using US Government Census data for 2010;[9] Table 2 provides a speculation of Bethel's potential for penetrating its parish area based upon potentially unchurched or unreached adults.

The Census estimated adult population over the age of eighteen ranges from 70 to 75% [10] based upon totals for each respective city.[11] By deduction, if a maximum estimate of 34% was assumed (based upon Barna's research), it would further suggest that approximately 21,000 adults would be classified as unreached or unchurched within Bethel's local parish area. This provides some clue about how many *may* be potentially available in the city and surrounding communities for reaching to make new disciples. In

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[9] US Census, http://www.census.gov/ (accessed May 22, 2012).

[10] Ibid.

[11] Quick Facts, From the US Census Bureau, *Middletown*, http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/39/3949840.html (accessed, May 21, 2012).

applying this same method to the African American population, the available estimates are much lower. The competition to attract disciples from this demographic is

Table 2. Estimated Potential Local Penetration for Bethel AMEC

Area	Total Population (2010)	Adult Pop. Est.[12]	Potential Unchurched Adults	African American Adult Est.	Potential Unchurched African American Adults
Middletown	48,694[13]	36,861	12,563	4313	1466
Franklin	11,771[14]	8769	2982	106	36
Monroe	12,442[15]	9083	3088	336	114
Trenton	11,869[16]	8308	2825	83	28
Total Est.	84,776	63,019	21,458	4838	1644

higher among the twelve other African American churches in the same community (eight of which are within one to four city blocks and walking distance of Bethel). The other reality is that census data may not include all members of society who are transient or disenfranchised within the community.

While an increase in membership by 240 would more than double the current membership of Bethel, it appears on the surface to be reasonable, since there is likely a number of unreached people of all races in the parish area. There is a significant challenge in understanding what would be the most effective approach for each represented group within the broader demographic. Additional competition is reportedly

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Quick Facts From the US Census Bureau, *Franklin, Ohio* http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/39/3928476.html (accessed May 22, 2012).

[15] Quick Facts From the US Census Bureau, *Monroe, Ohio,* http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/39/3951310.html (accessed May 22, 2012).

[16] Quick Facts From the US Census Bureau, *Trenton, Ohio,* http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/39/3977322.html (accessed May 22, 2012).

substantial as noted in a September 22, 2011 article published in the Middletown Journal.

Based upon the following research from the Hartfort Institute for Religious Research:

> Southwest Ohio has a high concentration of mega churches
> compared to the rest of the state. Of the 52 Ohio churches with
> congregations around 2,000 or more people, 11 are located within
> or near the 60-mile corridor between Dayton and Cincinnati,
> according to the Hartford Institute for Religion Research.[17]

Middletown is located within this same corridor. As Bethel is now being

challenged to move towards discipleship, the research suggests, according to this article,

that: "Small community churches may be struggling with declining membership, but

mega churches continue an upward ascent, religious experts say."[18]

Bethel's 202 membership is made up of 100% African American; 37% male, and

63 % female. Without knowing exact ages, an estimate based upon observation would

suggest the congregation is represented by 20% of its members being over the age of 60,

and 15% under the age of 18; and the remaining 62% falling somewhere between these

two age groups. This suggests that there are enough healthy adults able to do the work of

discipleship if they are willing, trained, and prepared.

What this project has challenged Bethel and the pastor to do is look beyond the

obvious difficulties ahead in *crossing the Jordan* to the promise of synergy if they are

obedient and collaborative in their efforts to go and make disciples. It is the same

underlying premise which required God's people to prepare themselves, and to trust God

with the outcome of their effort in ages past. The situation is like the story of the

fragmented Israelites who faced the bulging Jordan River. The enemy in the land of

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[17] Richard Wilson, "Megachurch growth follows national trend: Many area churches have attendance of 2,000 or more," *Middletown Journal*, http://www.middletownjournal.com/news/middletown-news/megachurch-growth-follows-national-trend-1254636.html (accessed June 5, 2012).

[18] Ibid.

promise for Bethel is not mega churches, nor any church for that matter. The foci or

objects of attack are the forces that distract and cause about one third of the population to

remain outside and away from the will of God.

The commission from Christ is what still sends Bethel to go forward without

hesitancy, not exclusively to build numbers up for Bethel, but to increase the overall

Kingdom of God. The inward challenge now is in preparing the church of Bethel to

extend itself outward in realizable disciple making, and in receiving new disciples, when

they are reached, as true blessings from God.

Attendance

Bethel's attendance records were used in this research as a measurement of

outward focus. Figure 7 contains Bethel's average attendance pattern over twenty six

months from January of 2010 through May 2012. Table 3 provides statistical results of

this attendance record.
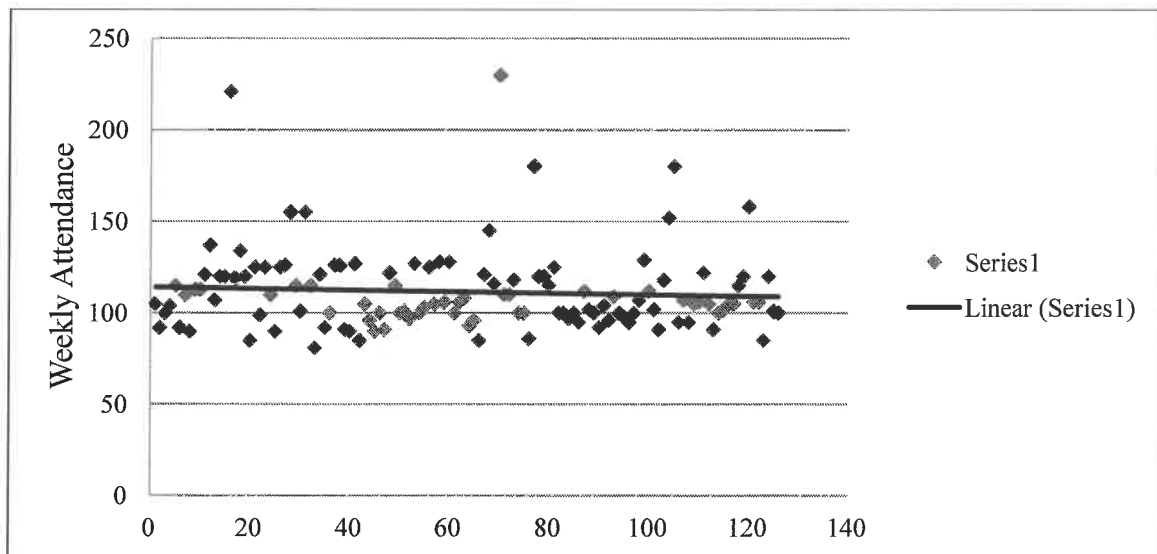
Figure 11. Bethel Attendance Distribution January 2010 through May 2012

With the exception of special holiday attendance peaks at Easter, Mother's Day, Christmas or special events during normal worship time, Bethel's attendance trend line demonstrates a slight decline over the time considered in this specific evaluation period.

Table 3. Bethel Attendance Statistical Data: January 2010 through May 2012

Average	112	
Median	106	number separating the higher half of a sample
Mode	100	the value that occurs most frequently
Min	81	Lowest Attendance
Max	230	Highest Attendance
Standard Dev.	23	Avg. Variance from the mean

While there are no exact records available for many former years, the context team shared their observations with the pastor. They reported that the same or similar pattern of attendance, ranging from 90 to 115 per week, has been the norm for approximately the last twenty five years. Since there has been no observation of significant change in Bethel's attendance since the mid 1980's, this further suggests that new people are not being reached as a normal practice of ministry.

The slight drop in attendance noted over the last three years reflects failing health of some of the more aged members, changes to weekend work schedules for several, school sport events held on Sundays, and other family matters which are routinely reported by members to the pastor.

While attendance at weekly worship service is an indicator of *inquiry* about Christ, worship, and Bethel in respect to the parish area, it does not provide a clear understanding of commitment to service from Bethel. This project and research revealed that the *level of commitment to service,* rather than available population for discipling, is the greater challenge to address.

In *Futurecast*, George Barna's research confirms that:

> . . . if the ultimate purpose of life is to love God with heart, mind,
> strength, and soul—as most Americans say—then defining success
> in terms of our obedience to God's will and principles makes
> logical sense. But the gap between avowed commitment and actual
> obedience indicates that half of all adults either do not see the
> connection or do not want to acknowledge it. [19]

This pertains to what Bethel members, and apparently all church members everywhere,

see as important and urgent in their lives. Barna's research also states that:

> Further evidence of the breakdown between our good intentions
> and our follow-through comes from research concerning our ideas
> about the things that give us the greatest pleasure and meaning in
> life. First, when asked to identify their most fulfilling relationship,
> not quite one out of five adults listed their connection with God or
> Jesus Christ as tops. (The winners, by the way, were relationships
> with family, spouse, and children, which together reflected
> 71 percent of the relationships mentioned.) Second, when asked to
> identify the group that is most significant in their lives, slightly less
> than three out of ten listed their churches.[20]

Another bit of information from Barna's research stated that : "Less than one-fifth

(17 percent) believe that their faith in God is meant to be developed primarily through

involvement in a local church."[21] He then goes on to suggest that what is really

happening is a "spiritual fermenting" and an upcoming "theological confusion" that

challenges the status quo. [22]

In reviewing attendance and membership patterns at Bethel, it became obvious

that those *in attendance* need to be developed to become disciples with a regenerated

outward focus to make other disciples. Attempting to add expensive attractions and

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[19] Barna, *Futurecast,* 143.

[20] Ibid., 143-144.

[21] Ibid., 145.

[22] Ibid.

dramatically changing every activity without a clear rationale would be futile, if people themselves cannot see the significance of commitment to the cause and work of discipleship through the church.

Discipleship has to be the first priority. This proposition forms the rationale for why this project implemented a managed change process that began by determining Bethel's mission based squarely upon the commission of Christ. If following Christ is not the object of concern, then it does not matter how much money or effort gets expended; the level of commitment from the congregation will not change.

The priority of discipleship was also the reason to evaluate the whole congregation in order to determine their demonstrated level of commitment, and to determine what needs to be done in order to help them grow. The following survey responses suggested some indications to help formulate a characterization.

Bethel Surveys I and II Data and Analysis

All one hundred and seventy two adult members of Bethel were requested to take each survey. The researcher thought it best to not exclude anyone. This approach was taken to reduce the potential for offending someone (whether they were interested in taking the survey or not).

The mode of distribution, invitation, and line of survey questioning; however, appeared to encourage participation from the more active members and attendees at church (those who would naturally have more interest in responding). There are approximately seventy seven active adult members in that group who are regular attendees (those who worship two or more times per month, and serve in some capacity).

These are the people who have current and updated contact information and would likely be at church to hear announcements about the surveys. Invitations were also forwarded to email addresses, and hard copies were made available at the church after worship for those who preferred to take them in that format.

Both surveys and questions were treated as anonymous data submitted directly by respondents to SurveyTool.com[23] data files. Returned hard copy data were entered by the researcher into these same survey files at SurveyTool.com.

Bethel Survey I had twenty two questions and was conducted throughout the month of October of 2011. Bethel Survey II had nineteen questions and was used to gather data during March of 2012. In survey I, there were thirty three total respondents and in Survey II, there were twenty eight. Admittedly, survey II was not as aggressively communicated, which could have contributed to lower participation.

While on line surveys are the most convenient and efficient method for conducting surveys, it was discovered that many Bethel adult members of all age groups were relatively uncomfortable working on a computer or accessing the internet. Using the hard copy alternative may have been an embarrassment or an inconvenience to many who opted not to take the survey at all. The choice was made to not mail hard copies; however that may be a better approach for future considerations.

Taking into consideration the most likely potential target group of approximately 77 adults who attend Bethel and (or) serve regularly, the data would yield a 42.8% response from Survey I, and a 36.5% response from Survey II. After having administered these surveys, the returned information was actually helpful, since the goal of the project

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[23] SurveyTool© is an on-line survey development and launching process to create surveys and receive responses. The features include automated compilation and data sorting capabilities. SurveyTool.com, http://www.surveytool.com/

was to develop disciples. Surveying those who were at some level of integration provided specific data responses that may have been biased if those with even less interest in discipleship would have equally participated at this point of research. Many of the questions would not apply to those who had been absent for a year or more from the church, or those who tend to remain detached with very sporadic attendance.

Both instruments had several identical questions for comparing data between surveys. Additionally, there were different questions for each survey to gather responses more pertinent to each period of study.

The discussion presented here will group questions and responses in the categories of: Demographics, Church Experience, Conception of Discipleship, Expression of Commitment, Sense of Importance and Urgency, Opinions and Perspectives, Satisfaction, and Suggestions for Improvement.
The Analysis and evaluation of question response data will follow each *categorical grouping* denoting the interconnection.

Each question is listed in numerical order according to its appearance on the actual survey. Identical questions that were on both surveys are presented here with a reference to each number listed from each respective survey. Results were tabulated based upon totals and percentages of response to each question; and then the distribution of responses within the question were based upon the number of responders.

Table 4. Demographics (Surveys I and II)

Question 1: What is your gender?

	Survey I Respondents 33/33 (100%)		Survey II Respondents 26/28 (93%)	
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Female
Percentage	9 (27.3%)	24 (72.7%)	6(23.1%)	20 (76.9%)

Question 2: Check your highest level of education.

Education	Survey I Respondents 33/33 (100%)	Survey II Respondents 26/28 (92.86 %)
Some High School	5 (15.15%)	2 (7.69%)
High School Graduate	6 (18.18%)	3 (11.54%)
Some College	9 (27.27%)	10 (38.46%)
College Graduate	5 (15.15%)	5 (19.23%)
Some Graduate work	1 (3.03%)	2 (7.69%)
Graduate Degree	9 (27.27%)	4 (15.38%)
Doctoral Degree	0	0

Question 3: What is your marital status?

Marital Status	Survey I Respondents 28/33 (84.85%)	Survey II Respondents 27/28 (96.43%)
Single Never Married	4(14.29%)	4(14.81%)
Widowed	2 (7.14%)	7 (25.93%)
Divorced	4 (14.29%)	4(14.81%)
Married	18 (64.29%)	12(44.45%)

Question 4: Race?

Race	Survey I (33 Respondents33/33) 100%	Survey II Respondents 27/28 (96.43%)
Black	33 (100%)	27(100%)

Question 5: Age Range?

Age Range	Survey I Respondents - 33/33 (100%)	Survey II Respondents 26/28 (92.86%)
19-40	2 (6.06%)	3 (11.54%)
41 - 59	18 (54.55%)	12 (46.15%)
60 - 75	13 (39.39%)	9 (34.62%)
76 and above	0	2 (7.69%)

Question 6: How many people live in your household?

Household size	Survey I Respondents 27/33 (81.81%)	Survey II Respondents 26/28 (95.45%)
1	6 (18.18%)	7 (26.92%)
2	14 (42.42%)	9 (34.62%)

Question 6 continued

3	6 (18.18%)	9 (34.62%)
4	3 (9.09%)	0
5 or more	4 (12.12%)	1 (3.85%)

Question 7: What is your annual income range?

Demographic: Annual Income Level	Survey I Respondents 30/33 (90.90%)	Survey II Respondents 25/28 (89.29%)
Less than $5000	2 (6.67%)	1 (4.00%)
5001 - 15000	1 (3.33%)	1 (4.00%)
15001 - 25,000	2 (6.67%)	4 (16.00%)
25001 - 35000	2 (6.67%)	3 (12.00%)
35001 - 50,000	7 (23.33%)	6 (24.00%)
50,001-75,000	2 (6.67%)	6 (24.00%)
75,001-100,000	8 (26.67%)	2 (8.00%)
over $100,000	6 (20.00%)	2 (8.00%)

Question 8: How far do you travel to attend Bethel?

Demographic: Travel Distance to Church	Survey I Respondents 33/33 100%	Survey II Respondents 26/28 92.86%
Less than 1 mile	5 (15.15%)	11 (42.31%)
1 - 5 miles	15 (45.45%)	7 (26.92%)
6 - 10 miles	6 (18.18%)	2 (7.69%)
11 - 30 miles	3 (9.09%)	4 (15.39%)
over 30 miles	4 (12.12%)	2 (7.69%)

Analysis of Demographics (Surveys I and II)

The same demographic questions were asked of both survey groups I and II in order to evaluate comparative response data. While responses from the target sample of church members were represented in each survey, it would be difficult to conclusively determine exactly if any of the same people who responded to survey I also participated in survey II.

Question 1 yielded higher percentage from both surveys from females compared to males. That may be reflective of the overall congregational characterization of actual

active adult members which total seventy seven people. Seventy nine percent of those actively involved in church are females and 21% are males.

Data response variances suggested different participants are noted in: Question 2, Educational Level; Question 3, Marital Status; Question 5, Age Range; Question 6, Household size; Question 7, Annual income levels; and Question 8, the distances traveled to Bethel. Question 1 regarding gender and Question 4 concerning race do not suggest any obvious contrasts in survey participants.

Regarding Question 2, it is important to mention that groups responding to both Survey I and II indicated a relatively high level of education. Results of the US 2012 Statistical Abstract of Higher Education[24] reported 19.8 % of African Americans are college *graduates or more*. From each respective survey group there are 45.5% and 42.3% who are college graduates or more. These data suggest that more active members of the congregation represent a relatively high level of education.

Questions 3, 5, and 6 were included to profile the survey participants more clearly by their contexts. The actual observed majority population of Bethel adults are married. Some attend as couples and some (usually women) without their spouses who are inactive or not members of Bethel. Many women and some men are widowed. While there is no proof of statistical significance from either survey result, there does appear to be similar comparisons with the observed profile of Bethel.

Question 7 Survey I reported that 53% had income levels above $50K per year. The percentage dropped to 35.7% in this income level for the Survey II group. Ten percent of the overall survey participants did not answer this question in Survey I or II.

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[24] "The 2012 Statistical Abstract,"*The National Data Book.* http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/cats/education.html, (accessed May24, 2012).

This suggests that they could either have very high or low incomes and are more reluctant to share information considered private (even anonymously).

Question 8 was designed to gather data about distance and convenience in attending Bethel, and to determine any indications for need to expand the transportation ministry. The majority of respondents from both surveys lives 5 miles or less from Bethel making it more likely that getting to church is less of a problem for most people. Bethel does supply van transportation to and from church free of charge upon request.

Table 5. Church Experience

Question 9 (Survey I): What is a full member of Bethel?

Understanding of membership status	Respondents 33/33 (100%)
Someone who grew up at Bethel	4 (12.12%)
Someone who has attended for a long time	1 (3.03%)
Someone who got saved	1 (3.03%)
Someone who got Baptized	1 (3.03%)
Someone who got saved, baptized, and took vows of membership	27 (81.82%)

Question 10 (Survey I) and 9 (Survey II): What is your relationship with Bethel?

Relationship Status	Respondents 33/33 (100%)	Respondents 28/28 (100%)
Full Member	33 (100%)	28 (100.00%)

Question 11(Survey I): Do you have family who attends Bethel?

Family at Bethel	Respondents 33/33 (100%)
Yes	32 (97.00%)
No	1 (3.00%)

Question 12 (Survey I): What is their status?

Family Connection to Bethel	Respondents 25/33 (75.76%)
Full Members	19(76.00%)
Attendees, but not members	3(12.00%)
Don't know	3 (12.00%)

Membership status questions were used to gather data from the survey groups pertaining to their understanding of what it means to be a member of the church. Question 9 responses suggest that the survey group did select the preferred response of "Someone who got saved, baptized, and took their vows of membership."

At the beginning of this project, it was clear that constructing actual membership rolls would be a painstaking effort based upon the lack of precise data and records, sporadic attendance patterns of some members, as well as the lack of a general understanding that *everyone* should be willing to make an open confession of commitment (if they have never done it before). The pastor has observed a tendency for people to claim themselves or relatives to be members of the church, but no one remembers when or if they actually joined. Through this project, 202 members were determined and verified by the pastor, collaborative leadership team, and Stewards as of May 12, 2012.

Questions relevant to family connection were used to evaluate familial relationship. Bethel is comprised of many people who are related through bloodlines or marriage. An advantage of family connections is to build teamwork and camaraderie through natural relationships. (Just as Jesus called several Apostles who were brothers.) On the other hand, kinship has led to difficulty because Bethel tends to be cliquish, not just in families, but also in longstanding friendships.

Table 6. Conception of Discipleship

Question 20 (Survey I), 25 (Survey II): What in your opinion best describes what Disciples of Christ are ?

Understanding of what Disciple of Christ is	Survey I Respondents 17/33 (51.52%)	Survey II Respondents 26/28 (92.86%)
Followers of Jesus Christ	11 (64.71%)	22 (84.62%)
Regular Church goers	1(5.90%)	1 (3.85%)
Those who faithfully tithe and give offerings	0	1(3.85%)
Those who work hardest in the church	0	1(3.85%)
Those who do outreach and charity	5 (29.41%)	1(3.85%)

Question 20 (Survey II): Without referring to anything else, what is Bethel's vision statement?

Recall of Vision Statement	Respondents 26/28 (92.86%)
Disciples on a Mission for Christ	2 (7.69%)
Disciples Energized for Christ's Service	1 (3.85%)
Disciples Engaged in Christ's Service	19 (73.08%)
Disciples in Excellent Service for Christ	2 (7.69%)
None of the above	2 (7.69%)

Analysis of Conception of Discipleship

Question 20 (Survey I)/25 (Survey II) afforded survey participants an opportunity to express their understanding of Christian Discipleship. While all of the choices are attributes of discipleship, actually *following Christ* was the preferred or best response. Both groups provided data which suggested the majority selected this choice.

Question 20 (Survey II) was testing the respondents recall of Bethel's vision statement (to evaluate if cultural understanding has been affected by the language of discipleship).

These results indicate that the majority of the group (if they did not look for the answer elsewhere) were able to recall the correct answer of *Disciples Engaged in Christ's Service.* The data also gives some clue that after three years, there is still a need for greater emphasis for some who missed the correct answer.

Table 7. Expression of Commitment

Question 13 (Survey I): How often do you normally attend Sunday Morning worship at Bethel?

Frequency	Respondents 25/33 (75.76%)
Weekly	21 (84.00%)
2 - 3 times per month	1(4.00%)
1 time per month	1(4.00%)
Less than 12 times per year	1 (8.00%)

Question 14 (Survey I): If you do not normally attend, check all the reasons which apply to you.

2 Respondents 2/33 (6.06%)	Usually	Occasionally
Sickness		
Work Schedule	1	
Travel	1	
School Team Sports		
Recreation		
Family obligations and activities		
Visiting other churches		1
Question 14 (Continued)		
Visitors in my home		
Chores		
Rest/relaxation		
Don't want to		
Don't have money to contribute		
Don't have clothing to wear		
Don't have transportation to get there		
Don't like the pastor		
Don't like one or more of the members		
Don't like the services		
Don't think it is important		

Question 21(Survey II): What would you say is your greatest reason for coming to Bethel?

Categorical Responses	Respondents 20/28 (71.43%)
Choir/Worship Experience	4 (20.00%)
Spiritual Enrichment/Growth	8 (40.00%)
Family/People/Tradition	8 (40.00%)

Individual Responses:

Like the choir
To be fed spiritually
To learn of the Lord & feel comfortable at Bethel
Family tradition
To hear the word of GOD
To learn more about Christ and Bible
Becoming one family in Christ.
I believe in staying where God directed me
To become more Christ like in serving Christ and participating in his service.
The people
Love the Lord and Bethel
To hear the word of God
My home church all of my life, It's a part of my legacy
The worship experience
To worship the Lord and Bethel is the church that I grew up in. I'm comfortable with the people.
Worship and I love the Songs from the choirs
Commitment to being the best servant for GOD
I am Methodist raised in this church, I love this church and it is my family
To receive the word of God
Been my home for many years

Question 21 (Survey I), 26 (Survey II): Do you invite others to attend worship with you at Bethel?

Outward Focus	Survey I Respondents 19/33 (57.56%)	Survey II Respondents 26/28 (92.86%)
Often	3 (15.80%)	4(15.3%)
Sometimes	13 (68.42%)	14 (54%)
Rarely	2 (10.53%)	3 (11.5%)
Never	1 (5.3%)	5 (19.2%)

Question 16 (Survey I) 23 (Survey II): How often do you normally attend Sunday School?

Sunday School Attendance	Survey I Respondents 19/33 (57.56%)	Survey II Respondents 27/28 (96.43%)
Weekly	3 (15.79%)	6 (22.22%)
1 -2 times per month	1 (5.3%)	3(11.11%)
3-6 time per year	1 (5.3%)	3 (11.11%)
1-2 times per year	2(10.53%)	2 (7.40%)
Never attend	2 (63.16%)	13 (28.15%)

Question 17 (Survey I) 24 (Survey II): How often do you normally attend mid-week Bible Study?

Bible Study Attendance	Survey I Respondents 19/33 (57.56%)	Survey II Respondents 27/28 (96.43%)
Weekly	1 (5.26%)	4 (14.81%)
1 -2 times per month	4 (21.05%)	6 (22.22 %)
3-6 time per year	5 (26.32%)	3 (11.11%)
1-2 times per year	5(26.32%)	5 (18.53%)
Never attend	4(21.05%)	9 (33.33%)

Question 19 (Survey II): If you are not engaged and active in Church, would you get involved if asked?

Willingness to Serve if Inactive	Respondents 24/28 (85.71 %)
Yes	13 (54%)
No	1 (4%)
Maybe	10 (42%)

Analysis of Expression of Commitment

All of the above questions and response data express levels of commitment and dedication expected for those who are developing in discipleship and are participating in their own progress. The data provides some indications that in general the congregation has room for growth.

The lower interest and participation in Christian Education, lower worship attendance behavior (of some), and the general rejection to own accountability for behavior as noted by the sparse response to question 14 produces enough data to suggest the need for more interventions to direct and guide their focus towards *becoming disciples*.

Table 8. Sense of Importance and Urgency

Question 10. (Survey II): How important is worship for Christian Disciples?

Significance of Worship	Respondents 25/28 (89.23%)
Extremely Important	18 (72.00%)
Very Important	6 (24.00%)
Mildly Important	1 (4.00%)
Less Important	0
Not Important	0

Question 11 (Survey II): How important should giving tithes and offerings be to a Disciple of Christ?

Significance of Tithes and Offerings	Respondents 27/28 (96.46 %)
Extremely Important	15 (55.56%)
Very Important	8 (29.63%)
Mildly Important	3 (11.11%)
Less Important	1 (3.70%)
Not Important	0

Question 12 (Survey II): How important is it for a Disciple to pray and fast (if fasting from food is medically safe)?

Significance of Prayer and Fasting	Respondents 26/28 (92.86 %)
Extremely Important	16 (61.52%)
Very Important	8 (30.80%)
Mildly Important	2 (7.70%)
Less Important	0
Not Important	0

Question 13 (Survey II): How important is it to you to have new people coming to Bethel?

Significance of Church Growth	Respondents 27/28 (96.43 %)
Extremely Important	11 (40.74%)
Very Important	14 (51.85%)
Mildly Important	2 (7.40%)

Question 13 (Continued)	
Less Important	0
Not Important	0

Analysis of Sense of Importance and Inquiry

Questions 10 through 13 were all administered in Survey II after a series of discipleship sermons were given, and study guides distributed. The data suggests what value the respondents place upon personal behaviors of discipleship. While the questions were worded as it related to the church; they also reveal what is important and urgent about being developed as disciples. While the majority of this group of respondents tended to see all things as important, their response (especially to question 13) suggests they consider it less urgent to make disciples. This provided the researcher (pastor) with useful feedback indicating that there is a great need to instill a sense of urgency within the congregation concerning discipleship.

Table 9. Opinions and Perspectives

Question 14 (Survey II): How would you rate the church facility at Bethel?

Opinion of Facility	Respondents 27/28 (92.86%)
Excellent	8 (29.63%)
Good	18 (66.70%)
Average	1 (3.70%)
Fair	0
Poor	0

Question 15 (Survey II): How would you rate the sermons you hear at Bethel?

Opinion of Sermons	Respondents 25/28 (89.29 %)
Excellent	16 (64.00%)
Good	7 (28.00%)
Average	2 (8.00%)
Fair	0
Poor	0

Question 16 (Survey II): How would you rate Bethel's hospitality and warmth to newcomers and visitors?

Opinion of Hospitality	Respondents 26/28 (92.86 %)
Excellent	7 (26.92%)
Good	10 (38.46%)
Average	6 (23.00%)
Fair	3 (11.54%)
Poor	0

Question 17 (Survey II): How welcome do you feel to participate in the life of the church (activities, events, meetings)?

Opinion of Inclusiveness	Respondents 26/28 (92.86 %)
Excellent	12 (46.15%)
Good	7 (26.92%)
Average	4 (15.38%)
Fair	3 (11.54%)
Poor	0

Question 18 (Survey II): How would you rate Bethel's outreach and charity in the community?

Opinion of Outreach	Respondents 27/28 (96.43 %)
Excellent	4 (14.81%)
Good	8 (29.63%)
Average	8 (29.63%)
Fair	6 (22.22%)
Poor	1 (3.70%)

Analysis of Opinions and Perspectives

This group of questions was all a part of Survey II only, and was prepared to gather data concerning perceptions and opinions about certain features of the church that are important to the responders. Facilities (Question 14) were considered good by this group of responders. The church facility at the time of this survey needed to replace carpet that was showing signs of wear and tear. Question 15 regarding perception of sermons received a higher feedback score which suggests the sermons are effective for the respondents who answered. There was however a slightly lower response to the question. The researcher (who is the pastor and preacher) believes the respondents who

were more positive in their feedback are actually people who are experiencing personal growth and development. Those who are less committed are likely uncomfortable being challenged by sermons that encourage the congregation to move forward in discipleship. There are some members who have expressed to the pastor that they understand the standards are being raised towards discipleship, but they are not ready to commit more of themselves.

Questions 16,17, and 18 produced data concerning areas needing further work in hospitality, inclusiveness, and outreach to the community. These are significant areas for improvement.

Table 10. Satisfaction

Question 15 (Survey I), 22 (Survey II) 19: How satisfied are you with the worship services at Bethel?

Worship Satisfaction	Respondents 19/33 (57.58%)	Respondents 25/28 (89.29%)
Extremely Satisfied	12	12 (46.15%)
Satisfied	6	12 (46.15%)
Somewhat Unsatisfied	1	1 (3.85%)

Analysis of Satisfaction

While the data does not suggest a major problem in satisfaction with the worship experience at Bethel, it does provide some feedback that there is room for improvement or further analysis warranted. The significance for getting feedback is more about the effectiveness of worship. The pastor believes the goals of the worship experience should be to evangelize the unsaved and increase a sense of commitment within every worshipper to follow Christ.

Table 11: Suggestions for Improvement

Question 16 (Survey I): What do you think would improve our worship service?	
Suggestions	Respondents 25/33 (75.76%)
More selections from the choir	4 (21.05%)
Bringing in different preachers	1 (5.26%)
Shortening the service	5 (26.32%)
Getting rid of AME tradition	1 (5.26%)
Adding modern technology	7 (36.84%)
Add an early morning service at 8AM	4 (21.05%)
Keeping the nursery open	3 (15.79%)

Question 19 (Survey I): What do you think would improve Bible Study?	
Suggestions	Respondents 19/33 (57.58%)
Consistent meeting time	4 (25.00%)
Exciting format	12 (75.00%)
Hold it on another day	3 (18.75%)

Analysis of Suggestions for Improvement

These questions were designed to get feedback from Survey Group I concerning improvements they would suggest for the worship and Bible Study, since these were areas being most focused on in the study. This survey was taken before the introduction of Bible Study Guides, and helped support the idea for their introduction.

The responses to add more songs from the choir and shorten the worship service suggest a greater desire for entertainment coupled with less commitment of time. This is a demonstrated need for development of the congregation towards understanding the significance of focus upon Christ.

Other suggestions are currently being evaluated pertaining to worship technology, and early worship opportunities to accommodate work schedules.

Outcomes

Several initiatives were put in place to address needs for improvement in discipleship based upon Bethel's model for regeneration. The pastor served as the leader and facilitator for three Strategic Planning Sessions with the context team. Session I was held in October of 2011. It was conducted to present the project focus and then to evaluate Bethel's discipleship development needs based upon the mission of Jesus and the AME Church pertaining to discipleship. (Appendix C: Strategic Planning Session I.). The outcome from this session was introduction of the Bible Study Guides to accompany the pastor's discipleship sermons.

The pastor and team discussed the barriers and difficulties in training every member due to the low overall attendance at Bible Study, and sporadic attendance of some members at worship. At the time, the pastor was using a special workbook manual entitled *Disciple: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study*.[25] The team felt these materials were excellent resources, but that there was a need for more specific Bethel lessons or study guides that could reach a wider group of people. The director of Christian Education suggested that the pastor prepare an accompanying study guide for the congregation to take home with them after hearing each Sunday sermon.

This has proven to be well received by the congregation. Copies have been shared with a member serving overseas duty in Afghanistan via Face book, and with others who are unable to attend Bible study regularly due to work schedules or other obligations. The main mode of distribution is *take home* hard copies provided after worship. One person

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[25] Richard Byrd Wilke and Julia Kitchens Wilke, *Disciple: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993).

uses them for lunch group Bible studies with work mates who are not Bethel members, but enjoy using the study guides. Approximately forty hard copies are prepared each week. Most weeks, additional copies are reproduced as requested.

While this pattern of usage suggests that the Bible Study guide is widely distributed on an individual basis; it also means that the guide is being used predominately for personal Bible study rather than for group discussion (as designed). Bible study attendance at the church has not significantly increased as a result of these efforts, and has not reached a weekly attendance level comparable to the numbers of copies or electronic distributions made each week. Yet, everyone who uses the guides says it helps their review of the sermon text and helps their application for the Bible in their lives. Therefore, the attendance issue will need further evaluation to determine; 1) whether it is really a problem, or 2) whether the Bible study guide is enhancing growth in discipleship. Meanwhile, the consistency in actually holding the Bible Study classes has been improved because the Director of Christian Education, the Associate Pastor, the Evangelist, and a Steward all serve as back up teachers for when the pastor cannot teach the class.

Strategic Planning Session II (Appendix D) included Action Planning. This has not been fully implemented due to a fuller church schedule. The researcher (pastor) has established a permanent Collaborative Leadership Team in place of the project context team members (most of whom were context team members). This team will continue leading and assisting the pastor in managing the regenerated model of discipleship and future planning.

Strategic planning session III was devoted to Bethel characterization (Appendix E.). Characterization of the church was satisfactorily accomplished using an internal qualitative validation method based upon context team perceptions of *credibility.* In referring to Guba and Lincoln, William M.K. Trochim stated in an article *Qualitative Validity,* [26] that *credibility* could be used as an alternative criteria for judging qualitative research based upon the perspectives of the participants in the research.[27]

Data was entered on a spreadsheet as each member was evaluated using the Characteristic Review Guide (Appendix A). The team reviewed the data together to determine needs for corrections. A tabular form of the totaled results is shown in Appendix F. Distribution of Bethel's Discipleship (May 12, 2012). Placing these total figures on the Discipleship Development Model shows that Bethel, as of that date, was functioning in Phase A. Becoming Disciples as displayed by Figure 11.

Bethel's Members were located in Stages 2 and 3 with no significant increase or current activity in Stage 1. One inactive youth was listed in Stage 1. *Conversion* . No adults were in that category at the time of preparing this analysis. This was conducted after the eight months of sermons, specially prepared Bible studies, and special assignments of people (evangelist and youth pastor).

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[26] William M.K. Troachim, *Research Method's Knowledge Base*, rev. October 20, 2006. Handout in lecture at United Theological Seminary, by Dr. Jackie Baston.
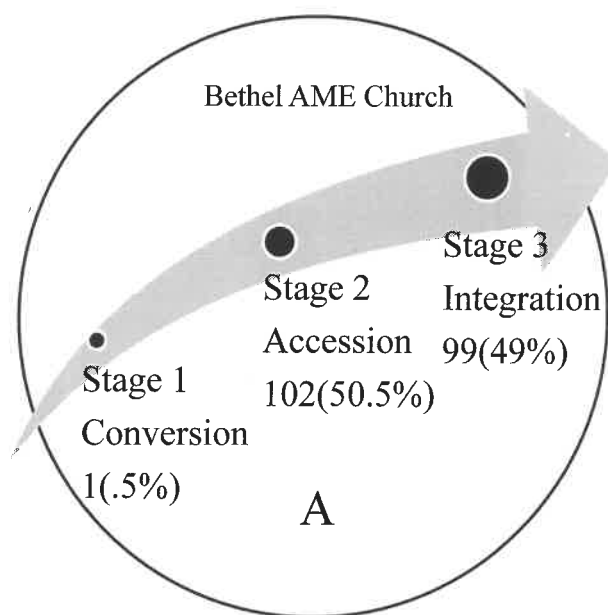
[27] Ibid.

Figure. 12. Distribution of Bethel Becoming Disciples

One hundred and two members (50.5 %) of this congregation were classified into

Phase A. Stage 2. *Accession.* These are full members of the church. Many have been

members for years (with the exception of those who have joined more recently). This part

of the congregation has not fully integrated with the life of the church in service, worship,

Church school, or Bible Study. Some regularly attend, but do not normally get involved

in any activity or assume responsibilities of service.

Forty nine members tend to remain detached aside from sporadic worship

attendance, holidays, funerals, weddings, and special events. This category generally

provides lower contribution of resources and time. Thirty eight are categorically inactive

and an additional fifteen are away from Middletown (some temporarily, some have

moved; but all are retained on the current membership role).

Ninety nine members (49%) of the congregation were determined to be at Phase

A. Stage 3. *Integration.* All are engaged in some area of church life by holding a position

or involvement in a ministry. Most attend worship regularly (two or more times per month) and are contributing to the support of the church. From this group, an average of thirteen adults attend Sunday School or Bible Study at least twice per month, and thirty youth attend Youth Church and Sunday School regularly.

Over the years, an approach that has proven effective is nurturing the youth of Bethel through the process of Baptism, early training, and stimulation of their growth as *preparatory members* [28] into full member status as adults. Children under the age of eighteen are brought or sent to the church by parents and grandparents. This has been the predominate method for how Bethel has built its membership up through the years to its current level. That also accounts for why the church is principally made up of several family groups of close and distant relatives who grew up attending and joining Bethel. From November of two thousand and nine until June of two thousand and twelve, the same pattern remained.

The most important goal of this project was to engender and refocus the church on the commission of Christ to "go and make disciples." The AME Church has already listed how its architecture supports what Jesus said. From Strategic Planning and fuller discussion with the Official Board of the Church, the mission of Bethel based upon Christ's commission, was created and states:" Bethel AME Church is engaged in teaching people about Jesus through witness, word, and works to build God's Kingdom." This is the supporting goal of the vision statement "Disciples Engaged in Christ's Service."

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[28] "Preparatory Member - Used in relation to all children who have been baptized and are under the care of the church until they become full members. . . . "AMEC. *The Book of Discipline*, 678.

The pastor implemented an intentional manner of recognizing examples of effective evangelism so that the congregation would be aware of what the result of reaching others with the gospel would look like. The form to receive new members was redesigned with obvious emphasis placed upon the mission of disciple making. When new disciples are made and brought to receive Christ, the *disciple maker* is listed on the form, and receives recognition for their obedience. (Appendix G. New Disciple Form and Letter to Disciple Maker).The pastor, members or the context team, and class leaders were issued lapel badges with the emblem of Bethel's model of discipleship (See Figure 13. Bethel Discipleship Lapel Button) .

The smallest yellow circle represents becoming disciples, the larger blue circle stands for collaboration in making disciples, and the largest green circle indicates the synergy of the church's discipleship with God's blessing. The congregation was instructed to *inquire* about the button and to discuss its meaning with button wearers. This was used to help internal evangelism and growth to move the church toward outward discipleship and evangelism. Eventually, each member of the Church was personally contacted and given a discipleship button.

Figure 13. Bethel's Discipleship Lapel Button

Training was conducted for all persons serving in the capacity of Class Leader. The AMEC Discipline defines the organization of classes and designates their purpose as: "A class is formed to discern whether its members are indeed working out their own salvation and to receive what they contribute to the support of the Gospel."[29] This training was necessary to assure that all were prepared to serve the roles of class leaders and were ready to assume responsibilities for developing Disciples (See Appendix H. Bethel Class Leader Training).

Discipleship Survey

A final survey of Bethel's congregation provided data regarding their own perceptions of development over the period of treatment that included discipleship sermons and Bible studies.

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[29] African Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Book of Discipline*, 71.

A question concerning the more recent implementation of the Youth Church was added to gain more baseline feedback for a recent initiative. A total of fifty one respondents participated in the survey either electronically or by hard copy. The results are in Table 12:

Table 12. Discipleship Survey

1. Have you grown in your experience of Christian Discipleship over the last twelve months?

Growth	Respondents 49/51 (96.08%)
Yes	49 (100%)
No	0

2. Which things demonstrate your greatest areas of growth (check all that apply)?

Areas of Growth	Respondents 48/51 (94.12%)
Trust in God	39 (81.25%)
Understanding how to follow Christ	33 (68.75%)
Regular worship attendance	21 (43.75%)
Regular Sunday School attendance	6 (12.50%)
Regular Bible study attendance	10 (20.83%)
Personal Bible reading	18 (37.50%)
Personal prayer life	24 (50.00%)
Witnessing to others about Christ	14 (29.17%)
Inviting others to join me for worship at Bethel	10 (20.83%)
Sharing with the needy	14 (29.17%)
Showing love and value for others in my church	16 (33.33%)
Making personal changes to become more Christ like	22 (45.83%)
Sharing my resources in support of the church	14 (29.17%)
Giving tithes and offerings	12 (25.00%)
Spending time in service from the church	13 (27.08%)
Serving in the community	9 (18.75%)

3. Which things do you believe hurt your progress in discipleship?

Deterrents to growth	Respondents 45/51 (88.24%)
Busy lifestyle	14 (31.11%)
Family matters	20 (44.44%)

Question 3 (Continued)

My health	8 (17.78%)
Health of family or a friend	2 (4.44%)

3. Question 3 (Continued)

Work schedule	17 (37.78%)
Economic Problems	6 (13.33%)

4. Do you feel sermons have helped you grow as a disciple?

Helped by sermons	Respondents 47/51 (92.16%)
Yes	47(100%)
No	0

5. Are the Bible Study Guides which go with the sermons helpful to you?

Helped by Bible Study Guides	Respondents 43/51 (84.31%)
Yes	42(97.67%)
No	1 (2.38%)

6. Do you believe that Bethel's youth church will help our youth grow as Disciples of Christ?

Expected Help for growth of youth	Respondents 48/51 (94.12%)
Yes	31 (64.58%)
No	0
Maybe	17 (35.42%)

7. Do you have suggestions that the church or pastor could help you do to become a better Disciple of Christ?

There were a total of eight responses (15.69%) from the survey takers

1 Pastor just keep doing what you are doing. The light is definitely shining brighter because of your words from God

2 I would like to see Bethel having more fellowship opportunities

3 1) ensure that organization meetings held give options for an evening meeting for those who work, i.e. missionary society meetings for example. 2) add church wide prayer meetings more frequently for the benefit of connecting spiritually with God and Bethel members; to reinforce the disciple movement. 3) work with Class Leaders to assign members as prayer warrior.

4 Our Pastor has been a blessing and a inspiration to our congregation.

Question 7 (continued)

5   Not at this time, it's all on me. But I will say one thing I Love Bethel AME.

6   The Pastor is doing a great job. The sermons are inspiring and encouraging to all the meaning of being saved disciples of Christ. I will suggest stressing the idea of being more consistent and committed to the work of discipleship for Jesus Christ. Question 7 (continued).

7   Help me to become more patient, slow to judge and slow to anger. I want to be a better Christian and a better Disciple.

8   Actual real life examples of how to be a disciple, many creative different opportunities to learn how a disciple look in today's terms. come up with a catchy slogan that Bethel can say when temptation arises.

Analysis of Survey

The overall response from this survey was at about 45% of the average weekly attendance at Bethel. This rate was higher than response rates for both Surveys I and II. A likely explanation is that this survey included only seven checklist questions and one fill in, and it included no questions pertaining to demographics. Brevity and perceived privacy may have encouraged a greater response from the congregation.

While the survey was designed to retrieve data about congregational perceptions of their own development; it was also intended to compare these self perceptions with actual performance. Question 1 and 2 were prepared to offset each other and inquire how development has occurred and also what stifled it. Since the larger expression of perceived growth was "Trust in God" and "Understanding How to Follow Christ," the data suggests that awareness has been raised among the congregation about the importance of trusting God and becoming a Disciple of Christ. This is offset by the cares of life that are not being managed well enough to reach higher levels of performance and demonstrate what they say they believe.

Feedback concerning sermons and Bible Study Guides suggests there has been some positive influence upon the congregation to move towards discipleship. When given an opportunity to freely respond, such as in Question 7, the verbiage of discipleship suggest some change and improvement in perception of expectations.

A Significant Field Event

While it is always the work of the Holy Spirit to inspire conversion; *waiting to see who shows up for worship* is not the process Jesus described. The Great Commission sends those who have already been discipled out to others who have not. Jesus designated a specific work based upon mission, evangelism, and Christian Education that ultimately culminates in making new disciples. He did not say, "Wait to see if they come to you;" instead he urged his disciples to *go to them*.

Something happened on Sunday, June 3, 2012 that demonstrated this point and provided an example for how the process must work. At the end of a sermon entitled "Are You a Warrior or a Worrier" five youths and one adult, representing two different families, came forward to give their lives to Christ and begin the process of Christian Discipleship.

The important point that must be understood about this event is acknowledgement of the Lord's guidance and blessings on the results of two members of the context team and the pastor working in Phase B to *make disciples*. The researcher believes it confirms the basic design of the process (which originated with Jesus' great commission).

To further demonstrate to the congregation how the process worked, the pastor called the disciple makers to stand beside those they had invited to the church and had

ministered to, and introduced them to the congregation. This emphasized to the church how Christ called his disciples to this important work. For several months they had been in contact with these families and provided encouragement in their development.

Bethel can now report its membership level at two hundred and eight. There are six new converts. Additionally, two A3 members moved in the analysis to Phase B in recognition of their work. Within seconds, the picture changed (Figure 12), and the table was recalculated as depicted by Appendix I. Distribution of Bethel's Discipleship (June 3, 2012).
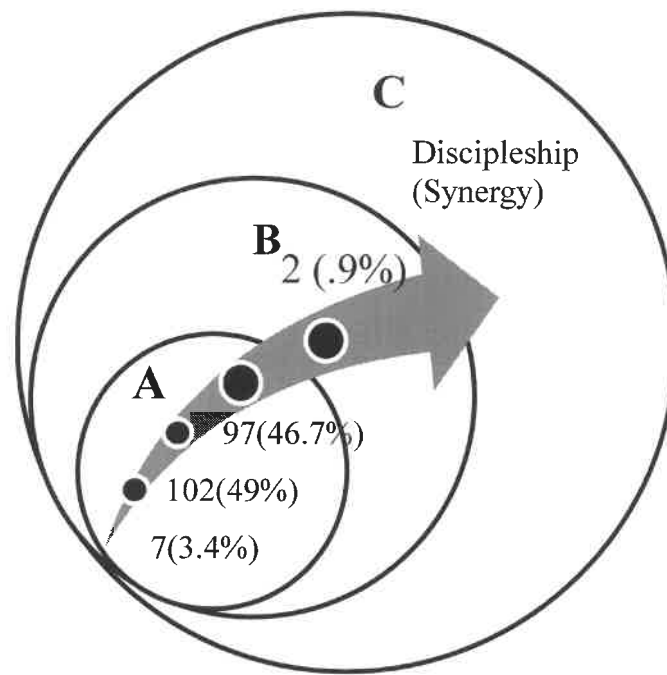

Figure 14. Bethel Becoming and Making Disciples (June 3, 2012)

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

> Yes, God can change the world through you, but you have to prove
> that you will allow God to transform you first. And you have to
> accept that meaningful change can be produced only when you
> cooperate with God. You cannot give what you don't have. You
> cannot be who you're not. The world will not follow you if you
> look and behave just like the world. What is impossible for you is
> possible for God.
> —George Barna, *Futurecast*

Reflection

Foundational work provided the necessary background to help shape the design of

A Regenerated Model of Christian Discipleship for Bethel African Methodist Episcopal

Church in Middletown, Ohio. This foundation began long before the author of this

project was led to formulate the structure of the model by means of a Doctor of Ministry

project at United Theological Seminary in August of 2010. It started with Christ, who

considered it necessary for any and all who wanted to be his followers to become and

then go and make disciples.

It is by God's calling, grace, and promise of his abiding presence that the work of

disciple making is even possible. An acceptance and response from those being called is

required in order for the process to be completed according to the Lord's plan. This forms

the basis for why a new pastor sent to Bethel three years earlier believed God required

her and the church to fully engage in discipleship. This belief was a part of who she was

as a young girl, and it was a foundational understanding embedded in her as a mandate to preach the word of God and to inspire others to receive the free gift of salvation and pardoning for their sin. This had pervaded her spirit for most of her life.

"Disciples Engaged in Christ's Service" became the defining statement according to the pastor's vision of what they and she must become. Not knowing exactly how the process to get them there would unfold, they joined together and accepted the mantle. In doing so, they understood that change, requirements, and challenge would certainly come their way. They would have to create the model surrounding who they were and what they must become while using their God given talents and resources to redirect their focus and devote themselves to the great commission of Christ.

The local church of Bethel felt the rising sense of urgency coming from their pastor when she preached to them about joining the theological and biblical underpinning of discipleship. She preached, "Go make disciples. Tell your families, friends, work mates, shoppers in the stores —people in doctors' offices —everyone you meet wherever you meet them. Tell them about our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! You catch them, and He'll clean them!" There appeared, however, to be no clear path or method to help them do what her sermons or vision suggested.

Most congregants came for worship at Bethel to ease troubled minds of their own problems in life. They wanted to be anointed with oil and have prayers dispatched to the Lord on their behalf. They wanted a word of encouragement to help them make some sense of facing housing foreclosure, the well paying jobs that were lost, relationships that were dysfunctional or destroyed, children caught up in street crime, diseases that were wreaking havoc upon their bodies, the money they did not have enough of, and the grief

they still had too much of. They wanted to hear the choir sing Bethel's theme song:

"Hallelujah, Salvation and Glory (He is Wonderful)."

> All praises be to the King of kings, and the Lord our God,
> He is wonderful
>
> Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah,
> Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah,
> He is wonderful
>
> Hallelujah, salvation and glory, honor and power,
> He is wonderful
>
> For the Lord our God is Almighty;
> The Lord our God is omnipotent,
> The Lord, our God, He is wonderful.[1]

Finding a way to lead the congregation of Bethel under the direction of this *wonderful God of salvation and glory* was likened to Joshua's situation of being newly appointed. Joshua was at a seasoned age, yet he was called to bring God's people, across the overflowing river of Jordan and into the land of promise. For the Israelites the situation was an unstoppable river flowing down from the mountain. They had to cross it and then face known challenges ahead in the land if they got there. Likewise, Bethel was facing a constant flood of daily issues, following a new pastor, facing the enemies of declining dedication, decaying neighborhood surroundings, struggling with church finances, and competition from those with more resources and assorted ministries.

An urgent call went out to go make disciples anyway. The call came with realization that this same Almighty God who so wonderfully preserved the church for

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[1] Unknown author, sung by many choirs and recorded by multiple artists. Recently recorded by Stephen Hurd, *My Destiny: Revelation 19, vol.1 Salvation and Glory* (Columbia Integrity Gospel Music/Columbia, Inc.), MP3, 2006.

over one hundred and fifty years, promised to still be in the midst of difficulties, and promised to still provide possible success through it all and on the other side based upon their willingness to obey Christ' command to *go*.

The situation required the author of this project to search beneath the surface and examine what brought Bethel to where it is currently. The Church is located within the old steel mill town of Middletown, Ohio. Families of people provide a backdrop of small town atmosphere within which big city ideas lost momentum when businesses shut down and factories closed.

There was a pressing need to pour through the annals of church history to discover the many sacrifices of people who thought it was important to become the AME Church in the 1800's. Their success happened through the will of God and the determination of its founder, Richard Allen along with great leaders such as Paul Quinn, Daniel Payne, and Henry Turner. A historical review revealed the little Bible study group who, in 1860, met in homes to pray and worship until they joined with the mission of African Methodism and proclaimed themselves to be Bethel AMEC in Middletown, Ohio. As the AME Church stretched itself westward from Pennsylvania to make disciples, Bethel did its part to become another of it its proud accomplishments.

It is a history that became enriched by many itinerate pastors of every sort who came because of the God they loved, the Church they obeyed, and the people they were sent to serve at Bethel. It was all because of the God who insisted that making disciples is a never ending task; a continuation of the assignment from Christ nearly two thousand years ago issued from a Galilean mountainside.

He is wonderful is truly the reason why Bethel must sing, and it is also the compelling reason for service and obedience. Somewhere along the way, reaching outside to make disciples of others with the Gospel of hope was lost in the process of managing all the responsibilities of being the church. Over the last twenty five years, Bethel has, as have most mainline American Churches, managed to maintain the image of a great church, while facing; declining worship attendance, unreplenished attrition, generational shifts in attitudes about the priority of Christ and service, and shrinking abilities to become more viable in service. Since that was the unmistakable direction noted, it was imperative to redirect the view to what the Lord expects. The situation required an intervention that addressed where the focal point was along with something to gain attention upon where it should be placed in the future.

Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger expressed in the book, *Simple Church*, that: "focus is a truth taught and affirmed throughout the Scripture. The focus of individuals in the Bible is humbling, and the principle of *one thing* emerges."[2] While they referenced it to another biblical text, their statement has a definite connection to Jesus' commission to go make disciples. This commission was the *one thing* that the early church took charge of. It overarches and includes all other actions of service. While doing this *one thing,* the disciple maker is exposed to evangelizing, baptizing, training others, caring for their basic needs for survival and confronting the social illness of despair and injustice. Discipling others helps them to grow and become disciple makers themselves. The mission is attached to the *one thing,* but has far reaching effects on many other actions that result from the principle of discipleship.

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[2] Rainer and Geiger, 201.

Matthew's Gospel informs us that, as followers came to worship Jesus, some had their doubts and worries after his resurrection. Christ interrupted their doubts about him, their fears and hesitancy about their own futures, and refocused them towards *one thing*. This *one thing* was discipleship. Therefore, the model of this project was designed to get attention refocused upon this same *one thing*.

Summary

The Regenerated Model

The model presented here was designed to help Bethel characterize its membership in contextual compliance with Christ's command to discipleship, and with following the AME Church's objective of discipleship as a primary consideration.

First, the model featured a construct that had the capability of following what the congregation did as it went about various phases and stages of development. The model was depicted by a colorful (yellow, blue, and green) visual (Euler or Venn diagram) of three containing circles called phases, all used to represent development of service and performance of the membership body. Progressing through the circles (or phases) indicated personal and congregational growth and development as disciples.

The terms most familiar in AME classification of membership (*Convert* and *Accession*) were used to denote location. A third category entitled *Integration* was added to indicate the composite of those who were more fully engaged members of the church.

Using a distinction between stages of development provided a way to assess the congregation over time in order to determine training and development needs as depicted in the smallest circle (circle A) of Figure 15. In circle A the small dots represent

progression from Stage 1 Conversion, to Stage 2 Accession, or Stage 3 Integration. Circle B represents the move into a phase of disciple making that results in *collaboration*. A Phase C response is triggered as wholeness of discipleship develops. Phase C is identified as *synergy* and is the full result of blessings from God in growth.

Secondly, the model presented a method to assess applicability of programs and activities that were either in place or were simply ideas to be developed for future consideration. The goal was to review programs and activities relevant to added value and potential effect upon discipleship. Additionally, programs could be identified as categorical tools under Strategic Planning, Mission, Evangelism, and/or Christian Education. These tools form a circle of influence interacting upon the congregation to stimulate discipleship. All of these components put together frame the regenerated model shown in Figure 15.
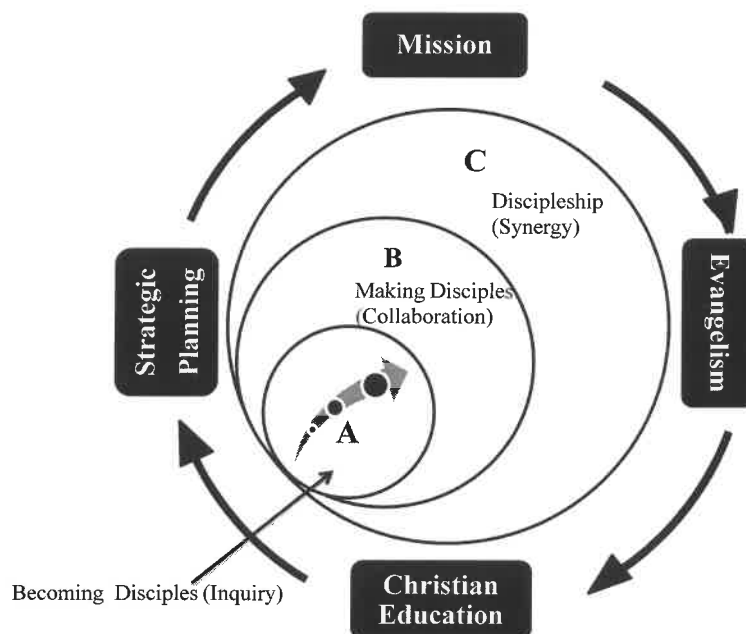

Figure 15. Regenerated Model of Christian Discipleship

This model was easily adapted as a teaching tool for Bethel. After the context team and pastor discovered that the whole congregation appeared to be operating in A, (e.g., becoming disciples) they set about the goal of training the church. The pastor and context team issued lapel badges that replicated the discipleship model and made it Bethel specific.

The goal in mind was to bring everyone into the process of growing together. There is much work still ahead to do. Of course, everyone wanted a badge to wear. Wearing a badge will not make one a disciple, but it will initiate conversation *about* discipleship and increase awareness of what it is to become one. The first ones to be issued the badges were the context team and trained class leaders who were to explain how progress is to be made in making disciples.

Figure 16. Bethel Discipleship Lapel Button

On Sunday, June 3, 2012, Bethel was blessed with six new disciples who were the first accounted for while using the model. This blessing was accomplished because two people (context team members), as Disciples of Christ, directly contacted new converts about the importance of Christ. They ministered to their needs by encouraging their attendance in worship, and prepared them for following Christ. This is the process that Jesus clearly stated needs to be done. Three were scheduled for Baptism to confirm their conversion, and three were previously baptized. The *disciple makers* stood before the congregation and presented the *new disciples* they had brought into the church.

The pastor believes the addition of new disciples was the Lord's blessing of increase that provided a confirming example and response to show that the approach taken by Bethel is what is expected in the future. It is due to this commission that Bethel can lift even higher praise that "*He is wonderful.*"

Future Use and Improvements of the Regenerated Model

Characterization

As important as congregational characterization was to the overall project, it was not without a few areas of limitation or needed improvements. First, it was limited to overall categories of A1 Conversion, A2 Accession, and A3 Integration (which are all levels of *inquiry*). There were no options for intermediary assessment. There is no way to look at the diagram and determine which smaller groups are more (or less) active within each stage.

While individuals will always vary in performance and response to Christ, there is no objective way (other than observed performance) to review individual actual progress

within each stage. This tool will never replace the need for effective pastoral and lay leadership within the congregation. It is a way to pictorially represent a clearer view of the whole congregation's performance in discipleship at a certain point in time; and then to compare it with the next assessment done at some future point.

It must be clearly explained and understood that this really is a leadership evaluative tool for pastors and spiritually matured lay church leaders who should *only* use it when they have had an opportunity to observe the congregation over a period of time (usually six months to a year). Accuracy of the assessment is subject to the abilities of the assessors to be unbiased when using this process. Characterization of members is only about their demonstrated levels of commitment and performance. Characterization does not take into account personal problems, personality conflicts and quirks, nor does it assess the quality of individual performance. As an example, all stewards and trustees are not the same in their dedication and commitment, but for purposes of this congregational characterization, all of these officers were counted in the A3 stage of development. For this very same reason; however, there is an advantage in using this characterization tool to help pastors and church leaders learn to be more objective and less driven to make decisions and selections for service based upon personality and preference. Also, there will always remain areas for pastors to address on an individual basis.

Characterization of the whole congregation is purposed for determining measures of progress, or degradation of quality in overall congregational development. Generally, the results would be best presented as composite figures on the Discipleship Development Diagram. Names should not be displayed in order to avoid contributing to an unhealthy competitive spirit among congregants.

Much care has to be practiced in how this tool is used so that members do not get the impression someone is negatively passing judgment upon their behavior. It has to be intentionally communicated that they alone determine their decision to submit to development and growth in service as God leads and blesses them. This is exactly what the model was designed to characterize.

The more problematic group to evaluate using the tool were those who fell into A3 Integration. This group demonstrated a wider range of committed behaviors.

The Pastor's initial interest when first coming to Bethel was to get as many people as possible involved in some area of ministry or service. While some began serving without much prior experience or higher levels of demonstrated commitment, the goal was to develop them over a period of time.

In prior years, the church limited certain positions such as Steward or Trustee to those who had already demonstrated significant dedication and had been members of Bethel for many years. While that is not an incorrect position, it was considered by the current pastor to be much too exclusive, and had fostered levels of inactivity and stagnant growth throughout the congregation.

With many members in newer positions, it is important to give them additional guidance, development, and feedback; and after a reasonable period of time, hold them accountable for committed service. Since Stage A3 contains these persons, along with those who are more faithful, it is important that each officer of Bethel have a chart of progression established for their growth in discipleship under the pastor's guidance. For this reason it is recommended that the Pastor and Stewards implement a mutual

performance feedback system (based upon the goals of discipleship) for the Pastor,
Stewards, Trustees, and Class Leaders.

Becoming Disciples

A2 Accession - Development

Trained Class Leaders and the Pastor are working more closely with persons
located in the A2 category of inactive members to help them become more fully
integrated with the church. Many of them are faced with schedule conflicts pertaining to
worship. The clergy team is discussing alternative options for worship experiences for
those who have legitimate challenges in attending. Options are being evaluated for the
addition of an early contemporary worship. This requires; however, a full analysis to
assure it is planned well and can be consistently maintained and that it will provide a
legitimate opportunity for helping those who are challenged in attendance and
engagement in the church. Until there is a greater outreach to increase attendance levels
at the traditional service, adding an early worship service may create divisions within the
congregation and competition between services among those who are already more
actively involved. These unintended results could happen instead of reaching those who
are inactive.

Ministry to the inactive has to be approached as an opportunity to positively
influence a brother or sister in Christ; and to appeal to their sense of responsibility and
accountability. When people have already been reached, then it is up to them to decide
the priority they want to place upon their service to God and Bethel. Previously discussed
in Chapter three was Tillich's clarification that "faith is the state of being ultimately

concerned."[3] Therefore, it is the inactive person who has to make their own decisions about matters of their own faith as their ultimate concern.

To reiterate what was stated from Bonhoeffer, he said that disciples " . . . do not possess any rights or powers over others. . . . the only way to reach others is through him in whose hands they are themselves like all other men."[4] This means that adults cannot be made to worship or get involved with the church against their will.

The researcher plans; however, to contact and survey those who are currently inactive. Some are being counseled by the pastor, but are often reluctant to share information about issues regarding their absence from the church or lack of more faithful response. Such a survey would have to be carefully planned so that it does not appear as a negative approach towards them, or a source of further discouragement.

Expending undue time and resources for those who deliberately choose to stay away, would not be the best investment. God has blessed the church to extend its outreach to those who are actually *unreached*, and who may respond positively if asked.

A3 Integration Development

The context team reviewed the models from Thom Rainer's, *The Unchurched Next Door*,[5]. They examined the results of his research study about attitudes that are categorically prevalent in unconverted or unreached persons. The pastor and team discussed the application of this information for training Bethel members how to

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[3] Tillich, 21.

[4] Bonhoeffer, 187.

[5] Rainer, *The Unchurched Next Door*, 57-77.

recognize and evangelize others about Christ (with a focus upon training those at the stage of *Integration*).

The primary method used by Bethel for making new converts has been limited to encouraging family and close friends. While this is still an important target to reach for discipleship, future emphasis must also be placed towards others who are located in the target parish area discussed in Chapter five. Additional development of the church to extend beyond racial barriers and social class distinctions based upon income, background, and status is necessary.

A *Disciples Reading List* is currently being prepared for distribution in the fall of 2012. This list is being selected for the context team and others who want to follow along with what the pastor is reading in subjects related to discipleship. Plans are underway to begin a seasonal book club for those interested in getting together to review and discuss features of certain books, or those who want to use social media venues to post comments about what they are reading. During the summer of 2012, the church followed the pastor in reading *Simple Church* by Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger[6] to get the process started.

Programmatic Review and Revision

Determining what processes needed modification was limited to discipleship sermons and accompanying Bible Study Guides. In the future, this evaluative process should extend to all programming within the church to see how and if what is being done adds value to the mission of discipleship.

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[6] Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church.*

While there were improvements in the quality of application specific to Christian Discipleship, it really did not mend the problem of poor attendance at Bible Study classes, and sporadic worship attendance for less engaged members of the congregation.

Based upon the characterization process, seventy seven adults and thirty youth usually attend Bethel each Sunday. Twenty or so attend Bible Study and/or Sunday School. Greg Ogden pointed out in *Transforming Discipleship*,[7] that Jesus picked only a few disciples to develop throughout the course of his earthly ministry. These disciples became the inner circle of Apostles. Ogden reminds us that there were stages of discipleship development which Jesus used depending upon individual people.[8] Ogden's point is well taken. Expecting immediate progress and advanced development was not even something Jesus saw as realistic for everyone. The real question pertains to whether or not Bible Study attendance really shows inward development. Could attending Bible Study just demonstrate who is available to come on Wednesday evening because it is convenient for them, or because it has been their faithful habit for many years?

In the final analysis, the pastor believes, Bible Study (wherever and however it occurs) should be used as a meaningful engagement of discipleship principles whether participants are present in the group, or studying alone. What is known is that the Bible Study information was more widely distributed. This provided those who took copies of the Bible Study guides an opportunity to reflect upon the sermon. Broader distribution to those outside the church may have happened as members shared the information. The Discipleship Survey data suggested that this occurred, and in that sense, the effort was successful according to their perceptions of their own growth.

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[7] Ogden, 61.

[8] Ibid.

Christian Education must have a larger emphasis at Bethel for the future development of disciples. One Discipleship Survey respondent suggested that it would be instructive if *real life modern examples* of discipleship should be provided. This suggestion implied that extraordinary contemporary examples should be presented to teach others about discipleship. Part of the cultural shift in attitude for Bethel must be an awareness and understanding that the best example to follow is Jesus Christ, himself. Such a cultural shift requires a process for perfecting oneself to become a disciple based upon individual gifts, callings, and abilities. One of the best examples of this was an elderly disabled woman who had been confined, as a result of a stroke, to a wheelchair for over twenty years. She was not only paralyzed, but also had a speech impediment. The pastor routinely visited with her and shared the sacrament of communion. This woman could be very abrasive in her tone and selection of words, yet never failed to express her ultimate desire to serve the Lord. Before she passed away in 2010, she repeatedly entreated her unchurched family to bring her to Bethel so she could recommit her membership. At this same time, she was insistent that a few of her family members come with her and also join the church. The result was that all three of them become very dedicated members. One of these persons now currently serves on the context team. This is a clear example, of what it means to be faithful in following Christ's instructions to become and then go make disciples. It requires, however using *individualized* gifts, graces, and abilities that will vary from person to person. For this reason, Christ's example should be the primary focus of Christian Education. He said to "teach them to obey all that I have commanded you."

Evangelism

A spiritually gifted and licensed Evangelist was appointed as champion of intercessory prayer and evangelistic development and outreach. The goal was to develop a team of persons who could collaborate as laity to exhort and incite the church to foster a Phase B *Disciple Making* culture that will be hospitable to new disciples that are brought in among the congregation. The full effect of this initiative is not realized at this point to the degree that the congregation has transitioned to this level. What is observed is the preparatory work being established as the spiritual climate during worship has been elevated through the sharing of the spiritual gifts of speaking in tongues and prophesy. There is an increase of intercessory prayer, fasting, praise in worship and generally more *inquiry* expressed from the congregation about what God is requiring of them. A spiritual profiling of the church in early 2010 revealed spiritual gifts, which at that time, were not being used. These are the gifts, which are currently emerging. It is not surprising that these gifts are appearing due to the emphasis upon following Christ more thoroughly. Much more work is needed to extend this into an outreach of evangelistic effort from more members of the church.

Community Outreach Survey

The initial attempt to survey the community through the research of this project failed in being successful to get enough reportable responses to draw any conclusions about how Bethel is perceived by local people. There were only six who took the on line survey that was distributed to about 50 people by email invitations. There was a wide

variation of answers from each of the individuals, making it difficult to identify any pattern of data response.

The researcher believes this is an important future endeavor for the church to undertake, but decided not to include the results in this research until broader and more controlled distribution can be accomplished. The potential value would help Bethel and the pastor gain important data about how the local community perceives Bethel's outreach to them, charitable programs, worship, and community engagement.

Conclusion

Through the work of this research it was discovered that important preconditions were necessary before launching the discipleship mission of Bethel AME church. The regenerated model presented goes beyond expecting the worship experience and pastor's sermons to be the sole option and opportunity for extending the invitation to become a disciple of Christ. What was discovered and is being concluded is that it requires a dedicated collaboration of effort by the pastor and church membership.

Self evaluation had to first be accomplished to determine Bethel's status of compliance with Christ's requirements. Secondly, there was a need to strategize how to get into compliance based upon a vision and mission to become *Disciples Engaged in Christ's Service*. It meant examining records of performance, asking critical questions and opinions, and collaboratively planning a regenerative model that would prayerfully guide their steps where Christ was sending them.

From the foundational Gospel text of Matthew 28: 16-20, used for this project, it was clear that Jesus expected his followers to leave the mountain in Galilee upon his

commission of them to go forth in service into the world. While it took trust in God and knowing that Christ would be with them, the expectation was for them to willingly carry out his prior teachings and plan together the specific details for making disciples within their context. For these early Christians, they had to go to Antioch and other regions throughout the Mediterranean, Africa, and beyond as they spread out from the home base of Jerusalem.

No longer were Christ's followers tethered to the promised land of the Jews and the many rules and laws that had helped guide their former actions. They were left with the Holy Spirit, memories of what Jesus had taught them, a clear understanding of his sovereignty, and a redirected mission statement that sent them out to people throughout the world. It was up to them to apply what they had been taught by Christ, and then to construct the rest of the detailed *architecture* necessary to carry it out. This is the same legacy that has been passed down through the history of Christianity and the church to all local congregations (including Bethel).

The results from this project demonstrates that there has been significant elevation of awareness among the people of Bethel of Christ's requirements; and that a movement is underway pertaining to Christian Discipleship. One of the responders to Question 7 in the final Discipleship Survey referred to Bethel's discipleship as a *movement*. At first, it appeared to the author to be less than a desirable response. After more thought, however, it was determined important to value it exactly as a *movement*. It is movement to become disciples and movement to go make disciples. Thinking of it within the context of a *movement* creates the necessary sense a urgency and importance that was lacking before this project began.

Survey data from before and after recommended interventions were implemented, suggested that the majority of Bethel understands that a Christian Disciple is a follower of Christ. While an initial vision statement was in place for Bethel prior to beginning this project, it took a dedication of effort, focus, and a team designing the regenerated model of *Strategic Planning, Mission, Christian Education and Evangelism* to govern the process. It all had to be based upon the great commission of Christ and the objective of the AME Church.

Without the benefit of actually developing this practical project and doing the research described in the document, it is unlikely that this movement of discipleship would have been underway for Bethel and the pastor. It took this process of analysis and collaborative dialogue to self evaluate and uncover the problems of and solutions for limited response to the command and demands of discipleship.

The evidence included here suggests a successful regenerated model has been implemented at Bethel by these efforts to positively manage and maintain a movement towards Christian Discipleship. This does not diminish, but supports the rich heritage of Bethel within its context of African Methodism and the community of Middletown. It employs strategies to become a local church of Christian Disciples who are learning, growing, and intentionally focusing their work upon making other disciples.

The researcher has concluded that this will become a continuous process requiring the pastor and each member to be developed as role models, dedicated servants, improved evangelizers, and studious learners about the mission of Christ.
Such a process requires willingness to collaboratively share a vision of the Gospel with others while personally and collectively accepting the cost of discipleship.

The cost of discipleship is giving oneself to God. It is full devotion to loving Christ with whole hearts, souls, and minds. When that level is finally reached, nothing can block the pathway forward to " go and make disciples."

APPENDIX A

CHARACTERISTIC REVIEW GUIDE

CHARACTERISTIC REVIEW GUIDE

	A. DISCIPLE BECOMING (Inquiry)		B. DISCIPLE MAKING (Collaboration)	C. DISCIPLESHIP (Synergy)
Stage 1. Conversion	Stage 2. Accession	Stage 3. Integration		
Pros: Accepting Christ as Savior Begin to question self Experience inward change Begin walk of faith Open to learning Get baptized (if not already) Enthused about newness New Member Study	**Pros:** Full members of the church More inquiry about God and the church Personal prayer & Fasting Shows some commitment Considers Bethel their home Gifts and talents may become visible Begins to feel part of the group	**Pros:** Full members Active at various levels Performs service Integrates gifts and talents Dedicated to church Holds offices and/or joins orgs. Regular worship attendance Bible study/Sunday School Personal prayer &Fasting Assumes responsibility Holds self accountable Regular Tithes and Offerings	**Pros:** Evangelizes others Open to Team work Occupied in discipleship Places Christ First Regular worship Fully integrated gifts and talents Self-sacrificing Committed to growth Open to change Responsible/accountable	**Pros:** Blessings of Growth and Development in becoming disciples and making disciples!
Threats: Vulnerable to falling away Confusion Challenge of personal change Unsure about themselves	**Threats:** Inactivity Detached behavior/ no service Weaker faith/Immaturity No commitment/undependable Poor/irregular Attendance	**Threats:** Stagnant growth Inward church focus Stuck in tradition/past practice May be inhospitable to new members Tends to be judgmental	**Threats:** Can slide back into Stages 3 or 2 May receive push-back from stage 3 performers Challenge of personal change No support from others	**Threats:** loss of blessings if faith and commitment is decreased or slide back into Stage 3 or 2

CHARACTERISTIC REVIEW GUIDE

A. DISCIPLE BECOMING (Inquiry)			B. DISCIPLE MAKING (Collaboration)	C. DISCIPLESHIP (Synergy)
Stage 1. Conversion	Stage 2. Accession	Stage 3. Integration		
Threats (continued) Church may not be hospitable Lack of real commitment Weak faith/Immaturity Sporadic attendance	**Treats (continued)** Not engaged underutilization of talents/gifts less financial commitment Vulnerable to falling away	**Threats: (Continued)** Slide back into Stage 2. Turfish/competition/pride Resistance to change		
Intervention Place in a Class Assign watch keep/Mentor Congregational Prayer	**Intervention** Class Leader response Pastoral guidance Provide easier access to information Congregational prayers	**Intervention** Class Leader response Pastoral guidance/Team Building Provide easier access to Congregational prayers	**Intervention** Class Leader response Pastoral guidance/Team Building Provide access to information. Congregational prayers	**Intervention** Class Leader response Pastoral guidance/Team Building Provide access to information. Congregational prayers

APPENDIX B

MATRIX OF DISCIPLESHIP SERMON SERIES,

STUDY GUIDES, AND SAMPLE SET

BETHEL AME CHURCH

Discipleship Sermons and Bible Study Matrix
Pastor Melonie A. Valentine

October 16, 2011 - May 27, 2012

Date	Theme	Sermon and Bible Study Guide Title	Text
10/16/2011	The Cost of Discipleship	Go On....Anyhow	Matthew 28: 16-20
10/23/2011	The Cost of Discipleship	The Lord is At the Crossing	Joshua 1: 1-5
10/30/2011	The Cost of Discipleship	Not There Yet...But On The Way	Philippians 3: 10-14
11/06/2011	The Cost of Discipleship	Half Won't Do	1 Kings 3:16-21
11/13/2011	The Cost of Discipleship	Our Prayer is for Workers	Matt 9:35-38
11/20/2011	Becoming Disciples	Are You Coming Home for Thanksgiving?	Luke 15:11-31
11/27/2011 1st Sunday in Advent	Becoming Disciples	When God Sends a Word...You Can Count on it	Luke 1: 11-20
12/04/2011 2nd Sunday in Advent	Becoming Disciples	Believing That Impossible is Possible	Matthew 1: 18-25
12/11/2011 3rd Sunday of Advent	Becoming Disciples	Don't Let the Devil Steal Your Christmas Joy?	Mark 1: 21-28
12/18/2011 4th Sunday of Advent	The Cost of Discipleship	Working While We Wait	Isaiah 40: 27-31 II Thessalonians 1: 3-12
12/25/2011 Christmas	Becoming Disciples	"According to the Gospel of Luke.., Jesus the Messiah was born in this manner....." SPECIAL WORSHIP CELEBRATION IN WORD & SONG	Clergy & Lay Readings from Luke 1: 46-49 thru 2: 1-32

BETHEL AME CHURCH

Discipleship Sermons and Bible Study Matrix
Pastor Melonie A. Valentine

October 16, 2011 - May 27, 2012

Date	Theme	Sermon and Bible Study Guide Title	Text
01/01/2012	Becoming Disciples	A New Year...But The Same God	Heb. 13:5-8
01/08/2012 Epiphany	Becoming Disciples	Do You See What I See ?	Isaiah 6: 1-8, John 12:41-50
01/15/2012	The Cost of Discipleship	Which Race Did You Enter?	Hebrews 12: 1-3
01/22/2012	The Cost of Discipleship	God is Doing a New Thing	Ac 1:21-26
01/29/2012	The Cost of Discipleship	Who Wouldn't Want to Join a Church Like That?	Acts 2: 42-47
02/05/2012	The Cost of Discipleship	But...That's Not Fair!	Acts 6: 1-7
02/12/2012	The Cost of Discipleship	You Just Never Know	Acts 9: 1-16
02/19/2012	The Cost of Discipleship	Who's Image Do You Bear?	Matthew 5: 43-48
02/26/2012 1st Sunday of Lent	The Cost of Discipleship	What Are You Doing for Lent?	Matthew 4: 1-11
03/05/2012 2nd Sunday of Lent	The Cost of Discipleship	Are You Planted in the House ?	1 Cor. 3:1-9 Psalm 92:12-15
03/12/2012 3rd Sunday of Lent	The Cost of Discipleship	Who Do We Need to Wake Up Around Here?	Jonah 1: 1-6 ; Ephesians 5: 8-14
03/19/2012 4th Sunday of Lent	The Cost of Discipleship	Are You Missing in Action?	John 20:19-25
03/26/2012 5th Sunday of Lent	The Cost of Discipleship	It Takes Jesus to Set Us Straight ?	Matthew 5:1-10

BETHEL AME CHURCH

Discipleship Sermons and Bible Study Matrix
Pastor Melonie A. Valentine

October 16, 2011 - May 27, 2012

Date	Theme	Sermon and Bible Study Guide Title	Text
04/01/2012 Palm Sunday	The Cost of Discipleship	Where Are You Seated?	Mark 14: 12-28
217			
04/08/2012 Easter Sunday	Becoming Disciples	All Power is In The Risen Christ	Matthew 28: 1-10
04/15/2012	Becoming Disciples	God Reveals Things to Us	John 1:35–36
04/22/2012	Becoming Disciples	Teaching Them to Pray	Matthew 6:5–15
04/29/2012	Becoming Disciples	Being in Season for Christ	Mark 11: 13–25
05/06/2012	Becoming Disciples	Wondering About the Date?	Matthew 24: 36-44
05/13/2012 Mother's Day	Becoming Disciples	What Your Mom Taught You	II Timothy 1: 3-7 Proverbs 22:1-6
05/20/2012	Becoming Disciples	Are You A Warrior or A Worrier ?	Psalm 27:1–5 & Matthew 6:25–34
05/27/ 2012 Pentecost	Becoming Disciples	What's So Holy About *Your* Holiness ?	Ephesians 4: 20-24

Sermon: Go On...Anyhow
By: Rev. Melonie A. Valentine
October 16, 2011

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matt 28:16–20).

Introduction

It was a few weeks after his resurrection from death when Jesus arranged to meet with his followers on a mountain somewhere in Galilee. It was a familiar meeting place for his those who had begun to follow him over the course of his earthly ministry. And when they saw the Lord, they worshiped him. Yet *some*, the text says, had their doubts or hesitancy. Now when we think of doubt, it reminds us of some kind of failure of faith. But let's look at their situation a little bit more and not be so quick to judge the faith of these ancient folks.

It's always good to get a grasp of the whole story before we start jumping to conclusions. These were people who had been traumatized, and were in a state of shock, grief, and fear. They had just witnessed their Lord and master falsely accused for the crimes against the Government...just because he was who he was. They witnessed Judas, a co-worker in the vineyard betray the Lord and then found out later he killed himself. Several of them were in hiding and running away in fear. Peter had even denied knowing Jesus when they arrested the Lord. They knew all too well how Jesus had been tortured in every possible way...how he had been humiliated... and then callously hung to die on a cross by the executioners. More false rumors were being circulated all throughout Jerusalem about them. Accusing them, Jesus followers, of stealing His body right from the tomb. Yes, there were enough reasons for plenty of hesitancy, uncertainly, and fear to go around for everybody.

While the text makes a point of their *doubt*, while in worship, it was not a matter which Jesus, himself, even made the first comment about. Instead *18...Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.* A resurrected Lord was meeting them once more with all power and authority in the very hands that just a few weeks earlier were cruelly nailed to the cross.

But...that was their world. So, now what about ours? Let me suggest to you that Christ is still taking the first steps towards us... right through our pain, our difficulties, and yes even our doubts and then redirecting our focus upon his

authority and power. He is still the same Jesus Christ...the same as yesterday, today, and forever!

He commissioned his early followers to go make disciples in spite of their level of stress with life, regardless of their doubts about the future, illnesses, family discord, overdue bills, job losses, dirty politics, tragedies, crime, and issues... and mess. He still sent them to go make disciples...anyhow! In spite of the all the stress in their lives.

One of the things that most psychologists tell us is that the best ways to relieve stress and to boost our confidence is to get busy working through our trauma and our issues. I believe the Lord urges us today, in the same manner to just *go on---anyhow!*

Since this was the approach He took with those sent from Galilee back then, we can assume nothing's changed about the requirement for us. If we expect to be Christ's followers, His Disciples, then we have to believe He won't call us *to* something, if He doesn't plan on getting us *through* something. Therefore, we just need to:

First: Go for it
Secondly: Get it Done
Third: Know He's *Got This*!

Go for it

"Go for it" is really what the great commission is all about. Having a go-getter attitude is what will get us past our excuses and even some very compelling reasons for why we think we can't witness to others and help them understand Christ's love and mercy. Don't we know that it is Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who would never send us where we cannot go in the first place?

"Go for it," is a common statement of encouragement we tend to give others when we want to coach them to reach for the high mark of their callings. To follow Christ will always mean to "go for it." Having faith enough to follow him into our world will always take us into unknown territory and challenge.

There will always be naysayers, roadblocks, hurdles to jump over, miles to go, and distractions along the way; but it is the mission of Christ for us to go make disciples. Since it is the pathway he has laid before us, it is important to know, he will order our steps in his word.

His word says, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

It is the great commission---not the great option. It is the Lord's command of us, His expectation. Because He has set the bar sometimes a little higher than we would like to jump, does not excuse us. We still must Go for it! We have to go on anyhow, and see what the end is going to be.

We who have been blessed to gain some knowledge of him have an obligation to be his witnesses to share the Gospel with others, and not just not be sponges. It is about being used, poured out in service, and yes...sometimes even pressured and squeezed a little to become blessings in the lives of others. So...go for it!

You might be asking, "So what if they don't want to hear it?" Well, the truth is that some may not. You may get some rejections, insults, and backs turned on you from people right in your own community. But Lord gives us a way to address that. Matthew, Mark and Luke all say:"shake the dust off your feet and move on." We've got to understand that the world and Satan offers people many more distractions all designed to lead their attention away from the lord. It's our job to grab their attention back!

Jesus knows much better that we do what must be faced. That's why he said Matt 10:16
" I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves."

That's why Jesus intended for us to:

Get it Done!

The *sending* or commissioning, forwarded their thinking and behavior towards the actual work of making disciples, performing baptisms, and then teaching others to obey what they had been taught by Him. We are still on a commission to get this done.

But to begin with, "Getting it done" suggests something about the Pastor, and members of a local church. You know what it suggests? It indicates that you are what it is you are trying to do. We cannot make what we are not ourselves. Therefore, the first order of business in disciple making is that we become disciples. Full followers of the lamb of God. It is something we have to work on "daily." Our Lord specifically said in Luke 9:23 and 24 "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

So getting done means *becoming disciples* in the house of God as well as going to others.
It is the cross of service we all must bear, in order to become his disciples.
Sometimes we get salvation and service confused with each other. You know what I mean...."I went to church and worshipped the Lord today, so I've already done my

service." When in truth, if we went to church---We were the ones who got served, fed, and blessed!

We are enjoying the fruits of <u>the Lord's labor</u>. We may have heard the choir sing for us, and the pastor preach the word to us! The Holy spirit showed up and showed out for us. And the salvation offered to us came from the Lord. We rejoice and got together in worship and praise as a result of the Lord making it possible. He bought and paid for our privilege of worship. As wonderful, necessary, and important as worship is in our lives---the only ones who really did any service in worship are those who did some work. (The Preacher, the choir, the ushers, and Stewardesses). The rest of us enjoyed the fruits of their callings to service!

Worship in that sense, is not service. It is a blessing and privilege. After the worship experience, it requires everyone to go out into the world to make disciples. That applies to those who served in the service as well as those who warmed the pews!

Joshua puts it this way in Chapter 24:13 and14..... *So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.'14 "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness.*

Getting it done means lifting the name of Jesus Christ to people who don't have a clue about his love and salvation. Not those who already understand it. Sometimes we limit our efforts to evangelize others by trading or attempting to steal members around from one church to the other. That's not the disciple making Jesus sends us to do, that's just *sheep trading* and stealing.

Disciple making would have never gotten off the ground had the early disciples not moved beyond the church in Jerusalem. We have to understand, the foot traffic has to move beyond the walls of the church. The Lord said *go make disciples of people of all nations.* That means, to non believers who have not placed the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ as the object of their faith. They may not all look, smell, or act like us...but they are the potential disciples the Lord is sending us to.

So, get it done, because He's promised to see us through!

Know that....

He's Got This!

The text says "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matt 28:16–20). When we think we've come to the end of the line. Jesus reminds us that he's got our back. He'll make a way out of no way... when it seems like we can't get through. He goes with us. Stands with us; after all, the battle is really His, anyway! So, "Lo, I will be with you always even until the end of time" is His commitment to those who are on their way and doing the work of disciple making.

That's a deal we can't refuse..Christ being with us--never leaving nor forsaking us. Right there in the midst of the storm; assuring we'll make it through. He's right there in the middle of the *Jordan* rivers in our lives he tells us to cross. He's right there as the *on-time* God's he's always been. Never leaving nor deserting us. He's got this! If God called us to it, he will bring us through it!

Conclusion

Following the Lord into our world means to *go for it* by evangelize others, sharing the hope we have about both today and tomorrow. It is about bringing folks with us to Sunday School, Bible Study and worship. Taking quality time alone with the Lord for prayer and fasting while we think on his goodness to us, and the service he's commissioning us to go do.

Getting it done, means that we do all we can to cover ourselves with the blood of Christ by accepting and following him to become His Disciples and doing the work of a disciple maker. Being a church member does not necessarily make one a Disciple of Christ. Getting it done is based upon the cross of service that takes self out of the way for the purpose of ministry. It is about us decreasing as he increases in our walk and work. The cross of service is not based upon a <u>cheap grace</u>; but it will cost something in commitment of time, resources, challenge, and effort because he expects more from us beyond our moments of praise and worship. To whom much is given, much is required (says the Lord). We all will pick up a few thorns in our flesh along the way! But, through the grace of God, we'll find the sufficiency to get it done if we just hold on! If we just hold out a little longer.

Then it is always knowing that *He's got this*! It was His power, His mercy, and His grace, which compelled him a little over two thousand years ago to make that last final trip on the road back into Jerusalem. It was only Him he had the strength to later rise up out of that tomb, with all power and authority vested in Him to commission his followers to go make disciples for him. He's got this!

He thought it not robbery, but his service and duty to lay down his life, submit himself to severe abuse for you and I; so that we could become a part of his plan of salvation. And one day we could we could lift Holy hands and proclaim "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!"

We have to tell others about this Lord, who brought us up out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage. We must become the Bible they aren't led to read. We must become an example of Christianity they cannot otherwise see, hear, and touch.

So....Go... go on anyhow! Go for it, Get it done, and know, that He's got this!

Bible Study Guide
Based Upon Sermon: Go On...Anyhow
By: Rev. Melonie A. Valentine
Wednesday - October 19, 2011

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matt 28:16–20).

1. Read a portion of the Gospel of Matthew leading up to the above text. Start at Matthew 28:1-18. Say a little about what happened

    a. The two women named Mary

    b. The angel

    c. The guards and soldiers

    d. Chief Priests and elders

    e. Disciples

    Then read the following texts from: Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–10; John 20:1–8. Compare these Gospel accounts. Discuss the similarities and differences. Each Gospel writer had their own inspiration for writing the text based upon how they interpreted the event, yet all of them report a risen Christ (which is the main point). It does not mean the Bible is contradictory, it just means each writer reported some variations of what happened.

2. Why did some of the disciples doubt while worshiping the Lord? What are some doubts that surface today (even though we are Christians)?

3. Discuss the nature of Christ's authority (verse 18).

4. What is the terminology applied to Matthew 28: 19-20?

    _____

    List the steps in disciple making Jesus gave:

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

5. What does Discipleship mean for Bethel today (using Sunday's sermon points):

Go for it_____

Get it done_____

He's got this_____

Notes:

APPENDIX C

STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION I

Strategic Planning Session I
A Regenerated Model of Christian Discipleship for

Bethel AME Church

Middletown, Ohio

October 24, 2011

Jesus said to his disciples:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

The New International Version
(Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011),
Mt 28:19 & 20.

Who was Jesus talking to?

"The significance of this is that the Great Commission was not given to the Apostles alone, not even the hundred and twenty disciples of the Upper Room, but to the whole church. It is for all Christians, not just the church's leadership! It was given on at least three different occasions: (1) upper room, resurrection evening (cf. John 20:21), (2) on a mountain in Galilee (cf. Matt. 28), and (3) on the Mount of Olives (cf. Acts 1:8)."

Source: Robert James Utley, vol. Volume 9, *The First Christian Primer: Matthew, Study Guide Commentary Series* (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 2000), 237.

Disciples Engaged in Christ's Service

means we are supposed to work together to be:

Followers ➤ of ➤ Jesus
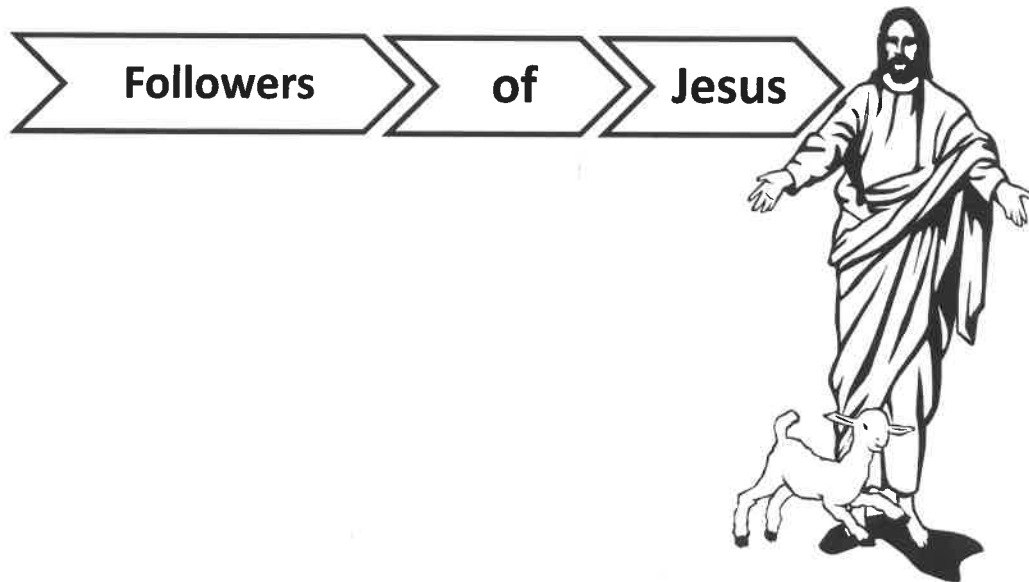
The AMEC Objective

"In order to meet the needs of every level of the Connection and in every local church, the AME Church shall implement strategies to train all members in: **(1) Christian discipleship**, (2) Christian leadership, (3) current teaching methods and materials, (4) the history and significance of the AME Church, (5) God's biblical principles, and (6) social development to which all should be applied to daily living."

Are We There YET?

- Bethel increased by 8 new members last year and 5 this year.
- Bible Study is "uhmm....complicated"
- Sunday school has about 10% of usual worshippers
- Attendance has plateaued at about 112
- Visitors to Sunday worship are scarce
- Less people (active and inactive) are on the actual membership roll, but are never here at the same time.
- Several key officers have very poor attendance
- The AME Church lists Bethel with over 400 members due to its facility capacity, perceived financial health, and potential for growth
- Missions and outreach are limited to about 2% of total church income

Bethel is not alone, or entirely to blame for the lack of focus upon Discipleship. <u>We are busy individuals. And, inwardly focused.</u> *(Yeah, me too....and so are you)*

Randy Frazee explains in *The Connecting Church*: *"The church of the twenty first century must do more than add worlds to an already overbooked society; it must design new structures that help people simplify their lives and develop more meaning, depth, purpose, and community."*

Frazee also suggests that:
"The 'hard to swallow' premise is that today's church is not a community, but rather a collection of individuals."

Frazee, Randy. *The Connecting Church: Beyond Small Groups to Authentic Community.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 45.

But....if we pray without ceasing! God will enable us to....

Remove Obstacles

Build the Model

Perform Discipleship
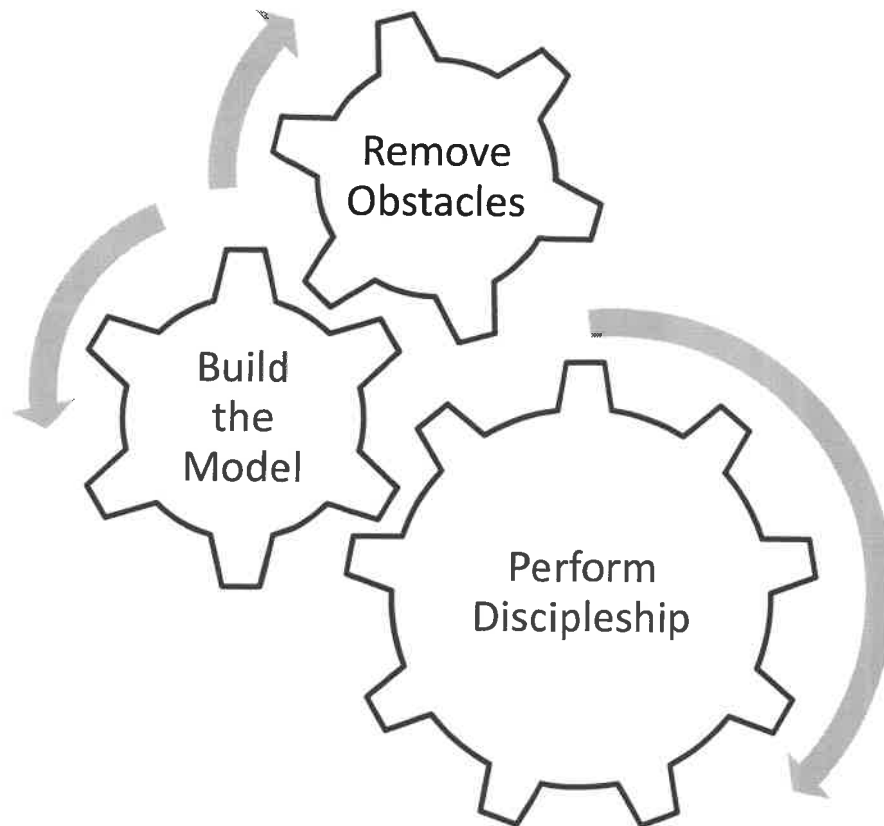
Bethel needs a process to guide its compliance with Christ's *requirement of discipleship,* and the goal of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.
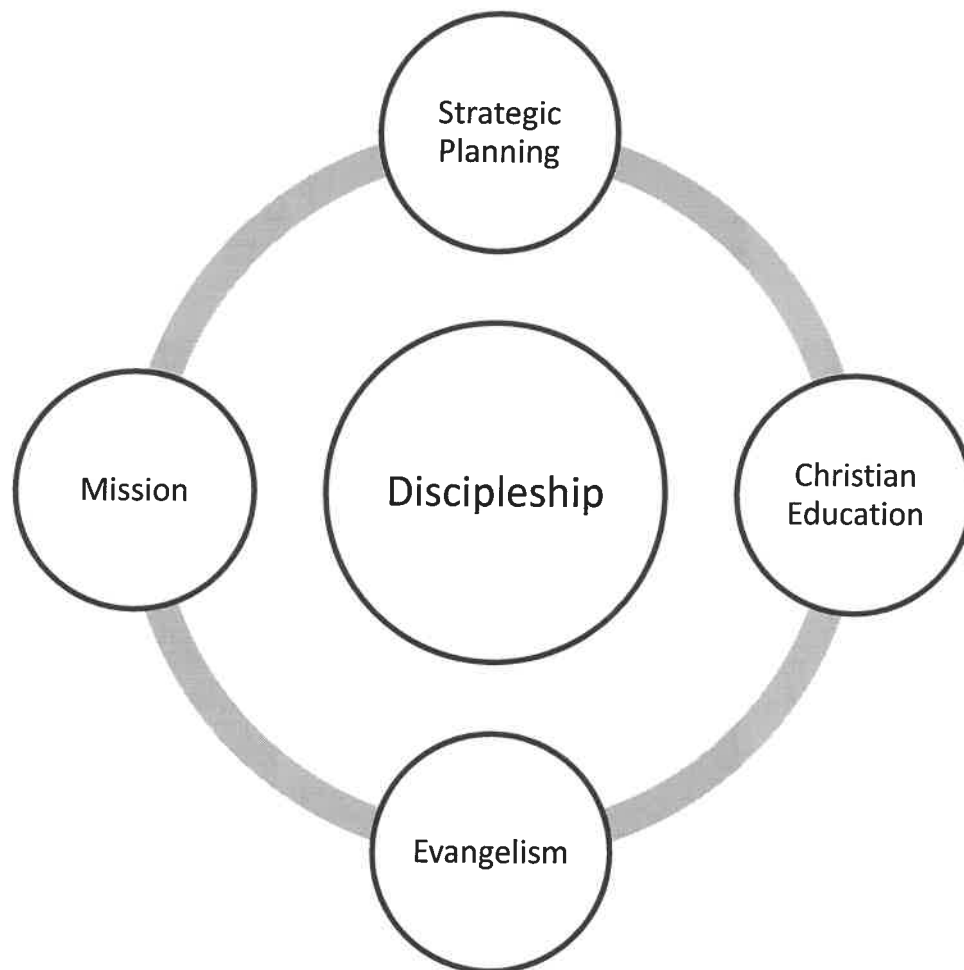
**A Regenerated Model Supporting
Christian Discipleship**

Why are these things necessary for Discipleship?

Strategic Planning: is the formal consideration of an organization's future course. **Our approach** *(Plotting the course)*

Christian Education: Christian Education supports and under girds all other ministry. *It* engages people in the understanding of Jesus' commandments and has the goal of edifying Christ through the church. It attempts to help persons learn about life in Christ and as a result persons grow in their understanding . *(Learning the steps in following Christ)*

Evangelism: The practice of relaying information about a particular set of beliefs to others who do not hold those beliefs. For Christians, it means relaying "good news" and convincing others to follow Christ and their need for salvation. *(Bringing others along)*

Mission: Removing the wall between church and community assuring that Christ's mission of Kingdom is our mission of discipleship. Providing open access to the Gospel through our outreach & improving the lives of others . *(Supporting the Mission of the Kingdom)*
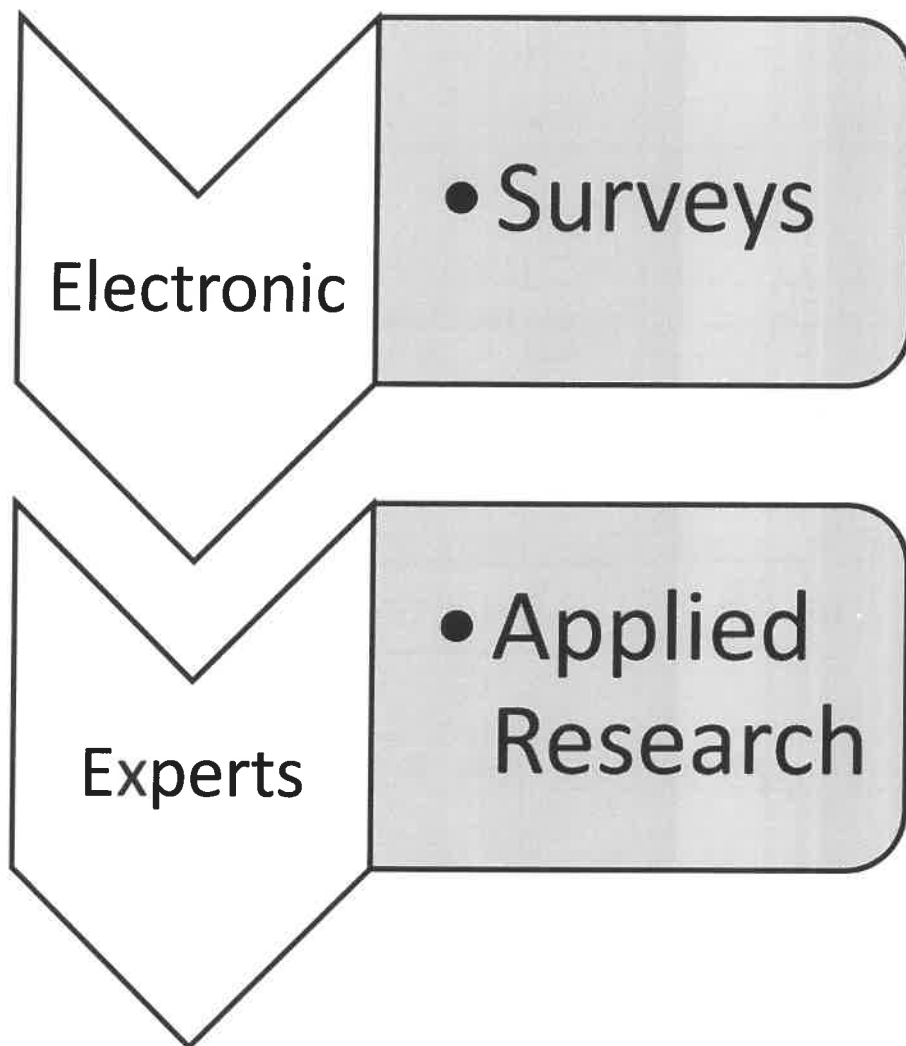
What Reactions Can We Expect?

Pros

- We can learn
- We can do it
- We will grow
- We can improve
- We will transform
- We are Disciples
- We make Disciples

Cons

- We've always done it this way
- We can't do that
- We won't improve
- It's too hard
- People never change
- Ain't "gonna" happen

Testing the Process

Electronic
- Surveys

Experts
- Applied Research

APPENDIX D

STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION II

A Regenerated Model of Christian Discipleship for
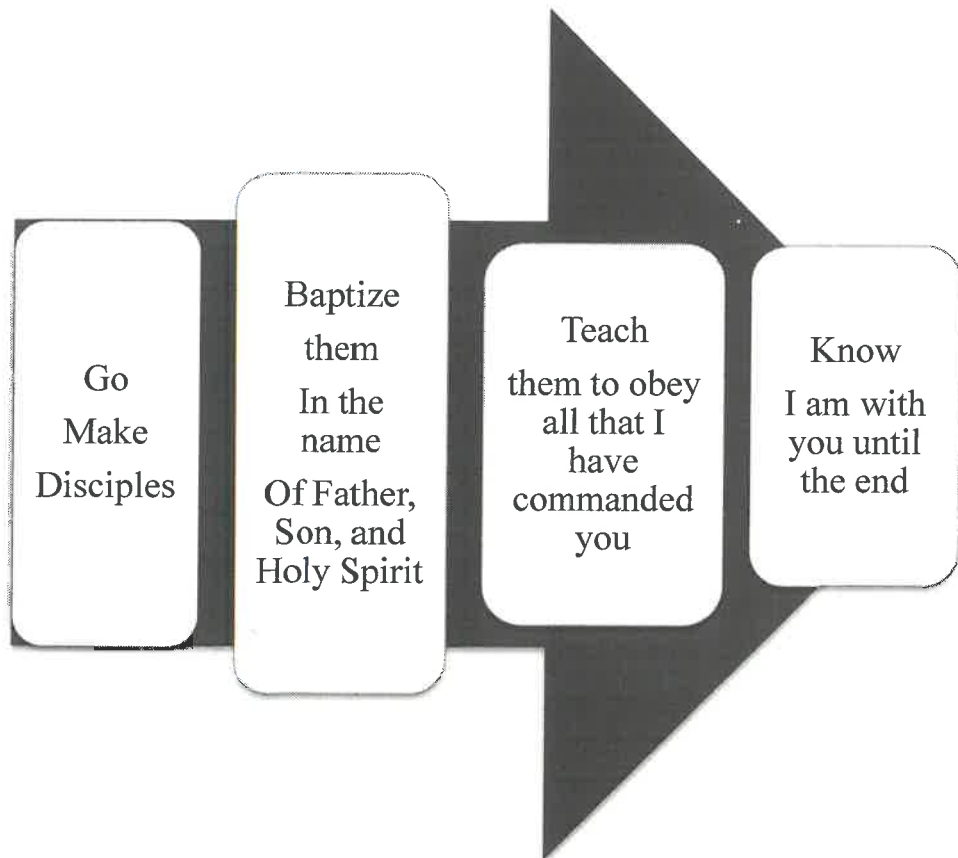
Bethel AME Church Middletown, Ohio

STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION II March 10, 2012

Agenda

9-10:   Overview

10 – 11:   Situation and Problem
                Analysis

11-12:30:   Building Architecture

12:30- 1:00:   Strategic Planning

What Jesus said to do... and how he said to do it.

Go
Make
Disciples

Baptize them
In the name
Of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Teach them to obey all that I have commanded you

Know I am with you until the end

Rev. Melonie Valentine,
03/10/2012

The "Architecture" of the
African Methodist Episcopal Church

The Mission of the AME Church is to minister to the social, spiritual, and physical development of all people.

The Vision At every level of the Connection and in every local church, the AME Church shall engage in carrying out the spirit of the original Free African Society, out of which the AME Church evolved: that is, to seek out and save the lost, and to serve the needy. It is also the duty of Church to continue to encourage all members to become involved in all aspects of church training.

The Purposes
The ultimate purposes are: (1) make available God's biblical principles, (2) spread Christ's liberating gospel, and (3) provide continuing programs which will enhance the entire social development of all people.
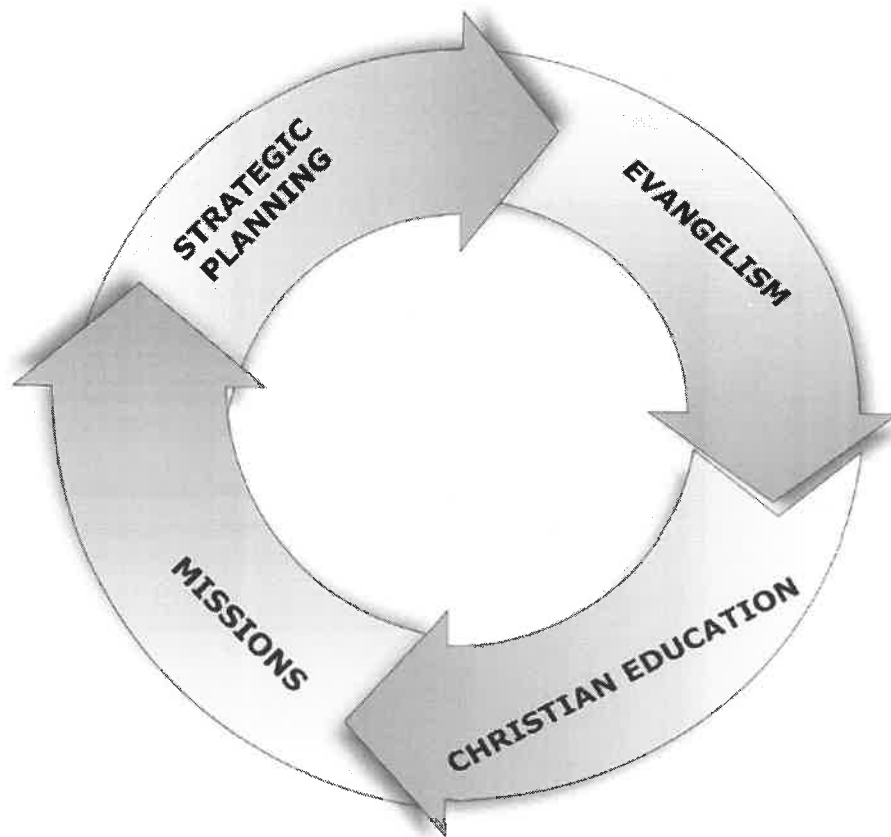
The Objective
In order to meet the needs of every level of the Connection and in every local church, the AME Church shall implement strategies to train all members in: (1) Christian discipleship, (2) Christian leadership, (3) current teaching methods and materials, (4) the history and significance of the AME Church, (5) God's biblical principles, and (6) social development to which all should be applied to daily living.
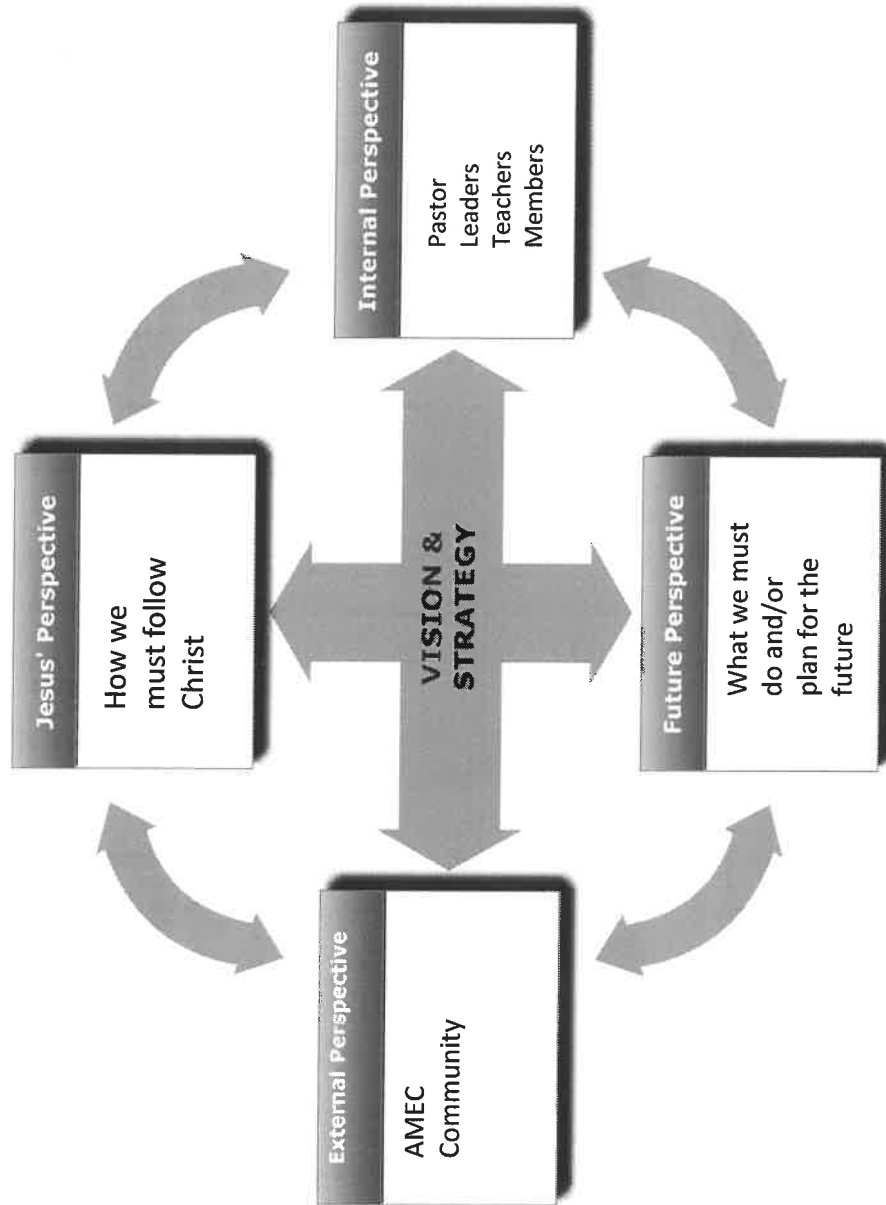
Bethel's Vision Statement

"Disciples Engaged in Christ's Service"

Let's now build our mission to get us to this vision...

How can tools of the trade help us do it?

Balancing our Local Church Viewpoint
(Who are the Stakeholders?)

Internal Perspective

Pastor
Leaders
Teachers
Members

Jesus' Perspective

How we must follow Christ

VISION & STRATEGY

Future Perspective

What we must do and/or plan for the future

External Perspective

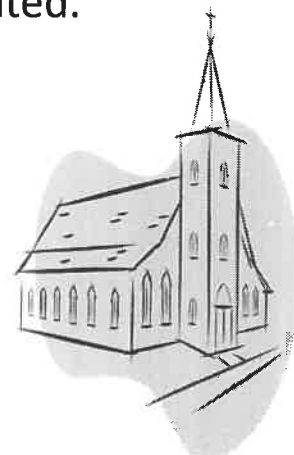AMEC Community

Adapted from the Balanced Scorecard by Robert S. Kaplan and Dave P. Norton. Harvard Business School Press. 1996.

Rev. Melonie Valentine, 03/10/2012

BETHEL AMEC SWOTS

SHOW ROOM

(STRENGTHS)

Where we believe God is pleased and expects us to continue

WORK ROOM

(WEAKNESSES)

Where we believe God wants us to improve in progress and work

ROOM WITH A VIEW
(OPPORTUNITIES)

Where we can see potential for growth, outreach, and development, and progress in areas not attempted yet.

JUNK ROOM

(THREATS)

Where there are obvious needs to address problems and external environmental issues

Rev. Melonie Valentine,
03/10/2012

1. How do we feature Bethel's strengths? How could our strengths help in other areas?

2. What weaknesses can we strengthen? And which could be turned around into a "strength or an opportunity?"

3. What "opportunities" appear to be the most promising to the future success of being disciples of Christ?

4. Which threats should be eliminated. What must be changed?

EVANGELISM	CHRISTIAN EDUCATION	MISSION

Action	Steps /Dates	Resources	Constraints	Potential Problems /Solutions	Assigned to:
Host a neighborhood Evangelism block party	1. Set date 2. Determine activities 3. Set Budget 4. Get Approvals from Pastor & Church (April 1) 5. Contact city to get approvals and permits (April 15) 6. Prepare & Distribute Announcements (TBD) .	Tables Chairs Refreshments ($) Handouts Ministers Evangelists Singers BBQ Grills Coolers Tents	1. Costs 2. Resistance from church members	Bad Weather (move it inside)	Evangelism Team Members

Rev. Melonie Valentine,
03/10/2012

APPENDIX E

STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION III

A Regenerated Model of Christian Discipleship for

Bethel AME Church

Middletown, Ohio

STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION III

May 12, 2012

May 12, 2012 (MAV)

The "Architecture" of the African Methodist Episcopal Church

The Mission of the AME Church is to minister to the social, spiritual, and physical development of all people.

The Vision At every level of the Connection and in every local church, the AME Church shall engage in carrying out the spirit of the original Free African Society, out of which the AME Church evolved: that is, to seek out and save the lost, and to serve the needy. It is also the duty of Church to continue to encourage all members to become involved in all aspects of church training.

The Purposes
The ultimate purposes are: (1) make available God's biblical principles, (2) spread Christ's liberating gospel, and (3) provide continuing programs which will enhance the entire social development of all people.

The Objective
In order to meet the needs of every level of the Connection and in every local church, the AME Church shall implement strategies to train all members in: (1) Christian discipleship, (2) Christian leadership, (3) current teaching methods and materials, (4) the history and significance of the AME Church, (5) God's biblical principles, and (6) social development to which all should be applied to daily living.

May 12, 2012 (MAV)

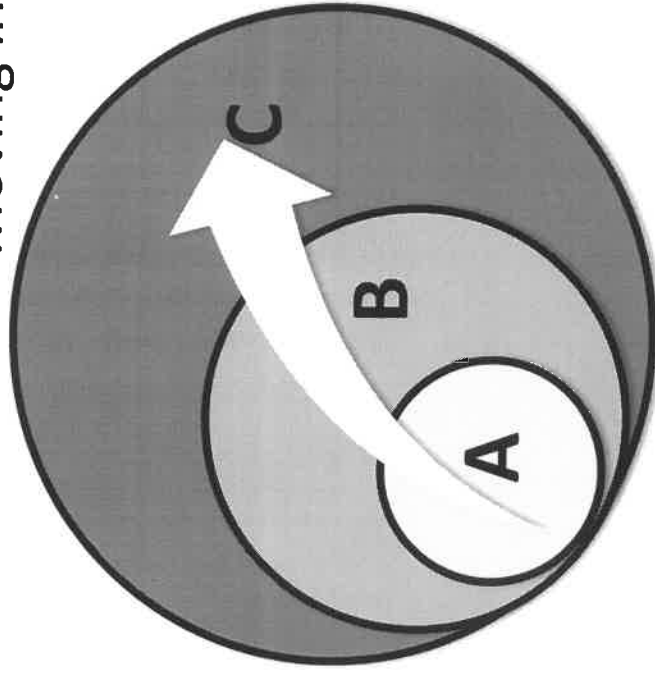# Bethel's Architecture

Vision:

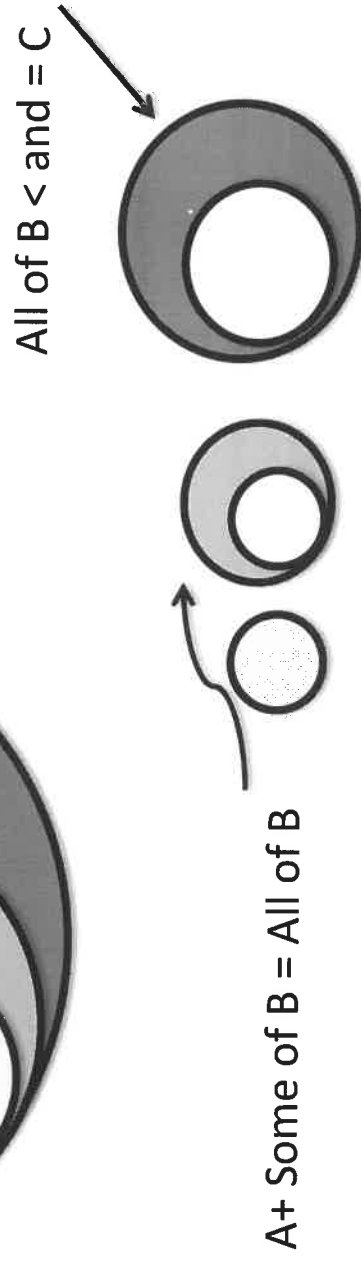Disciples Engaged in Christ's Service

Mission:

" Bethel AME Church is engaged in teaching people about Jesus through witness, word, and works to build God's Kingdom."

May 12, 2012 (MAV)
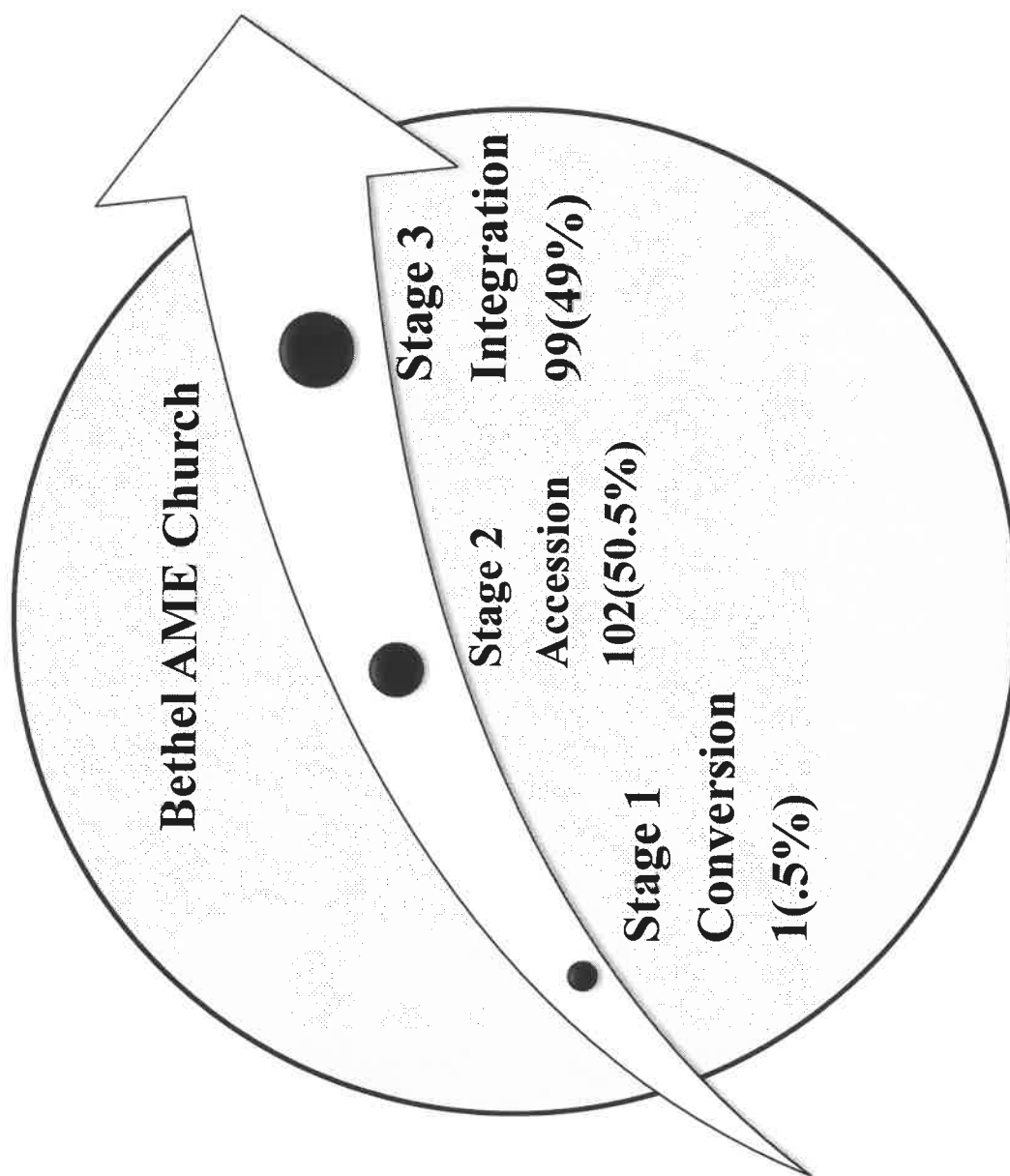
Characterization Model
Moving into the Mission

A. Becoming Disciples (*Inquiry*)
B. Making Disciples (*Collaboration*)
C. Discipleship (*Synergy*)

All of B < and = C

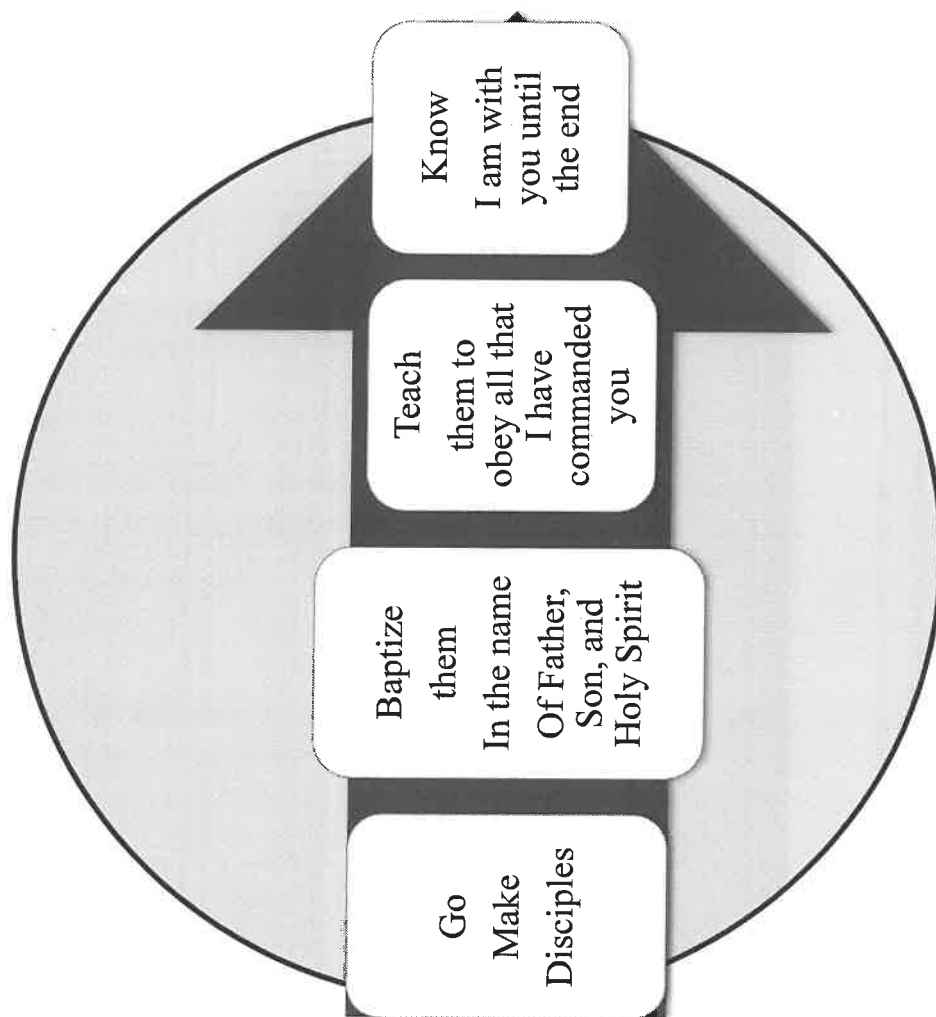A+ Some of B = All of B

Model of Discipleship Phase Development

May 12, 2012 (MAV)

Bethel AME Church

Stage 3
Integration
99(49%)

Stage 2
Accession
102(50.5%)

Stage 1
Conversion
1(.5%)

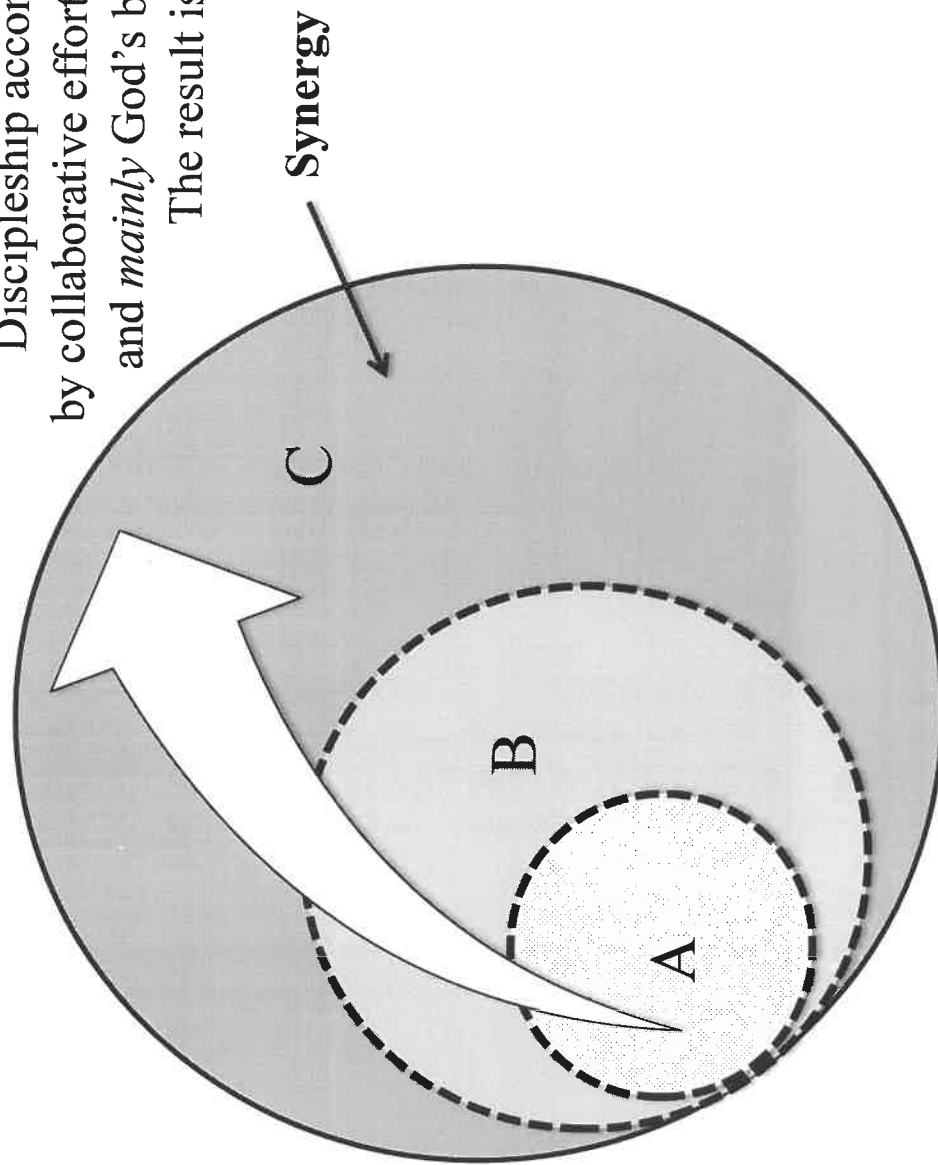**Phase A. Becoming Disciples:** *Inquiry*

May 12, 2012 (MAV)

Phase B. Making Disciples: *Collaboration*

May 12, 2012 (MAV)

Discipleship accomplished
by collaborative efforts done in B.
and *mainly* God's blessings.
The result is:

Synergy

C

B

A

Phase C. Discipleship: *Synergy*

May 12, 2012 (MAV)

Evangelism

Christian Education

Mission

Strategic Planning

C
Discipleship
(Synergy)

B
Making Disciples
(Collaboration)

A

Becoming Disciples (Inquiry)
Bethel's Current Location
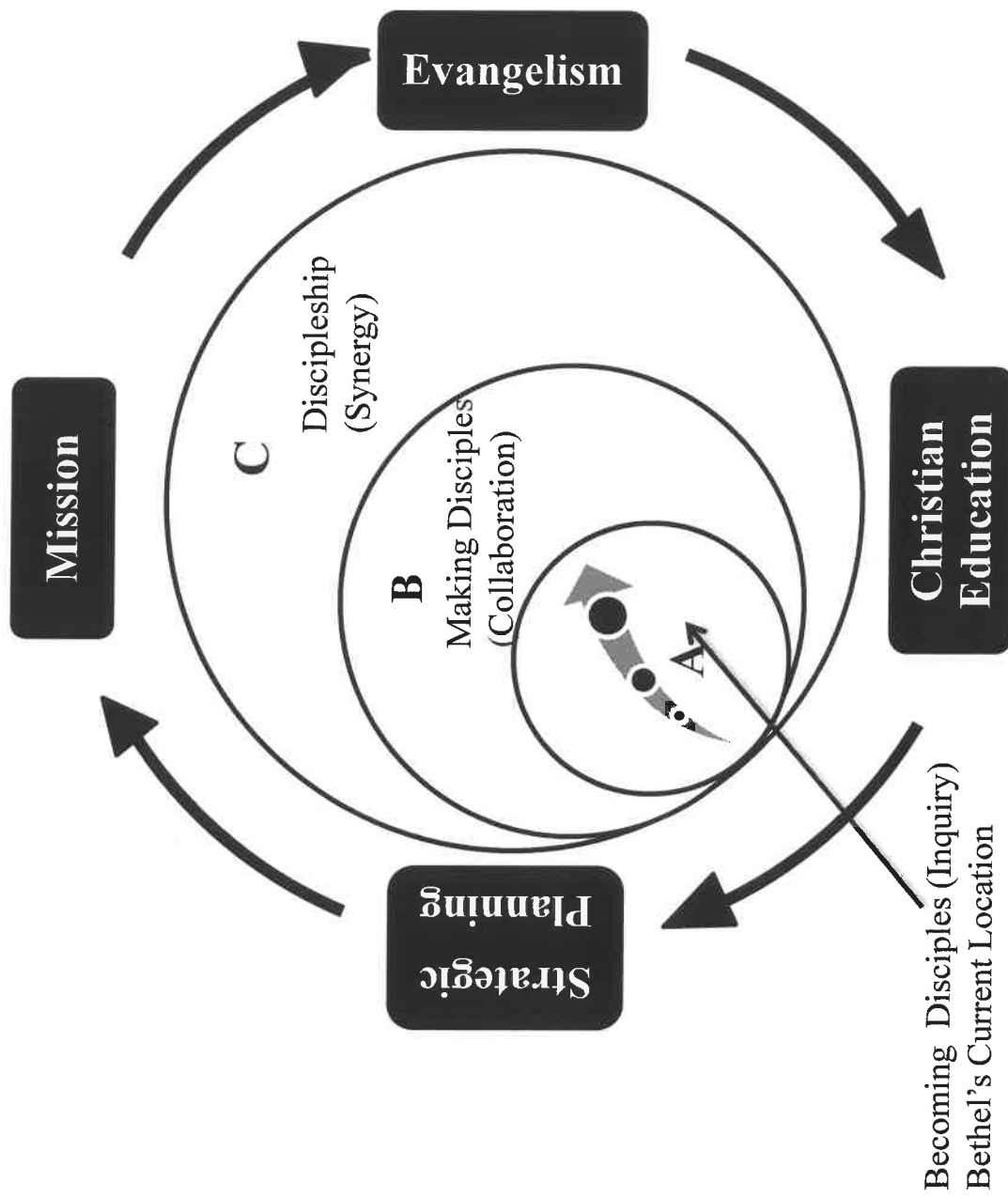
May 12, 2012 (MAV)

APPENDIX F

DISTRIBUTION OF BETHEL'S DISCIPLESHIP (MAY 12, 2012)

Distribution of Bethel's Discipleship (May 12, 2012)

Phase A. Becoming Disciples (Inquiry)			Phase B. Making Disciples (Collaboration)	Discipleship (Synergy)
Stage 1. Conversion	Stage 2. Accession	Stage 3. Integration		
	Active:(49) 29 (F) 6 (F/SI) 13 (M) 1 (M/SI)	Active: 61(F) 12(F Y) 16(M) 10(Male)		
Inactive: 1(F/Y)	Inactive:(38) 19 (F) 18 (M) 1 (M/Y) Away:(15) 2(F) College 4(M) College 1(M) Military 1(M) Incarcerated 3(F) Moved 4(M) Moved			
Total: 1(.05%)	Total: 102 (50.5%)	Total: 99 (49%)		

Legend: F: Female M: Male SI: Shut in Y: Youth <18

APPENDIX G

NEW DISCIPLE FORM AND LETTER TO DISCIPLE MAKER

Christian Discipleship Record

Bethel AME Church - Middletown, Ohio

New Member Disciple Information

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. Matt 28:19-20

Full Name:_____Date of Birth:_____

Address:_____ City: _____

State: _____ Zip:_____

Phone:_____ Cell:_____

Email:_____

Approx. Date of Previous
Baptism:_____

Convert □   AME Transfer-in □_____Youth 12-18 □   Under 12 □

Today's date:_____

Who discipled this person?_____

Attending Steward Signature: _____

The following information to be filled in later by the Pastor
Previous Church Membership/Affiliation_____
Former Pastor:_____
Planned Baptism Date (if not previously baptized):_____
Form of Baptism preferred: _____
Class Leader Assignment:_____
New Member Study Instructions:
_____
Date of Full Accession: _____

Congratulations! You Made Disciples!

Matt 28:19-20 says:

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." NIV

Dear Brother/Sister _____

Thank you for going as Christ instructed His disciples to make other disciples. Through your obedience and commitment to following Jesus, others have been contacted and evangelized by you.

_____

_____

_____

They now are part·of the Kingdom of God and are joining us at Bethel AME Church in Middletown as we continue this great and wonderful work of discipleship.

So keep up the good work, and God's blessings to you.

Yours in Christ's Service,

Pastor Melonie Valentine

APPENDIX H

BETHEL CLASS LEADER TRAINING

CLASS LEADER HANDOUT
BETHEL AMEC

WHY DO WE NEED CLASS LEADERS AT BETHEL to Help ?

- To assist in the development of Christian Disciples
- To provide mentorship for Bethel's Members
- To provide a safe focus for individual and smaller group development
- To encourage members of the class to be faithful
- To promote active prayer lives among the membership
- To increase participation in the life of the church
- To notify the pastor of progress of church members
- To notify the pastor of special needs in your group

WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS TO BE A CLASS LEADER?

- A Christian of good character who strives to follow Christ daily!
- A full member of Bethel AME Church
- Demonstrates leadership in faithfulness to God and the church
- Willing to serve as a class leader
- Sets aside time to do the work of a class leader
- Maintains good and regular attendance at worship service
- Attends Bible Study and/or Sunday School
- Has a personal commitment to prayer and fasting
- Loves the Lord, the church, and people
- Demonstrates cooperative spirit with the church and pastor

WHAT IS THE WORK OF A CLASS LEADER?

- Being a team leader for the members of your class
- Lovingly providing encouragement for members of your class
- Visiting your class members
- Calling your class members
- Arranging times for class meetings as desired
- Collecting tithes and offerings from your class members when they are unable to come for worship
- Encouraging your class members to grow in discipleship
- Mentoring your class leaders towards the standards of Christ
- Praying with the members of your class
- Keeping the pastor notified of the status of your class progress and problems.

Bethel Class Configurations - 2012

1. The AMEC Discipline recommends at least 12 members to a class, (see page 71). To follow this recommendation and to accommodate our need for greater focus with smaller groups, a class of 12 or more will be comprised of two smaller cell groups. A Class leader will be assigned as one member of each group. The full class may (if practical and on occasion meet together for prayer meetings or fellowship). But each cell will function independently; and each leader be responsible for watch keep over those in their own groups. Leaders within each class are expected to communicate and collaborate with each other as much as possible.

2. Bethel's total membership is listed at just a little over 200. This figure is currently being verified to assure all known members (active, inactive, out of town, shut ins, young and old) are accounted for so they may be assigned to a class and group. Every attempt will be made to distribute assignments fairly based upon a mixture of active and inactive members so that all class leaders will have similar levels of responsibility.

3. Class leader assignments and groupings are ultimately the pastor's responsibility (p. 72); but will include input from Stewards and Class Leaders. In some cases class leaders and members may be family members, and/or close friends, and in other cases, that is not the best option. The priority of assignment will be based upon what is best for leaders, members, and the church in developing the total membership towards discipleship. It is not a social club or clique.

General Guidelines and Tips

Leading Your Class to Discipleship

1. Incite Prayer and fasting; and inquiring about things of the Lord!

2. Check on class members status regularly. Particularly when they are absent from worship. Pray with them. Notify the pastor of problems requiring further attention. Recognize the signs when class members need referrals to other professional counselors.

3. Always discourage gossip within your class (and don't do it yourself). Redirect discussion towards the Lord or Christian living. Don't allow the conversation to head in the wrong direction. Be encouraging and positive--not discouraging.

4. Avoid topics too personal for mixed group discussion. Disallow behavior unbecoming a Christian in your class gatherings, or conversation with individual class members.

5. Make yourself available for helping class members, but do not place yourself in positions of compromise or question. Exercise good judgment.

6. Every class leader will have their share of inactive members. Do what you can to encourage them to become more active in the life of the church and pray with them. But do not allow them to consume more time and effort than necessary. If you are presenting the cause of Christ who calls us to discipleship, and they continue to refuse it, do not take it personally. Remember whom you are serving.

7. You may schedule periodic class meetings as you and the class members in your group would like based upon the needs and desires of the class. Meetings can be held at the church or another location of the class's choice. Class meetings should be prayerful and can be for fun and fellowship.

8. Please provide an offering envelope and receipt when offerings and tithes are collected from individual members of your class. Donations received should be placed in the offering plate by you the following Sunday after you receive them. Add the information   to your class leaders report for official board. But DO NOT hold monetary collections for extended periods of time.

9. Maintain accurate enrollment records for your class. Keep them in your files (See enrollment forms)

10. Do plan to visit members of your class who are hospitalized, in nursing homes, and rehab centers or shut in at home. Be respectful of everyone's time and privacy in your class. Plan in-home visits by scheduling them with the class member. Do

not show up unannounced or remain extremely long. Respect others privacy and time. It is a good idea (whenever possible) to have at least two for "in home" visits.

11.   Send greeting cards, emails, texts or remembrances to your class members for encouragement, congratulations, illness, sympathy, etc. It is important that they know you and other class members genuinely care about them.

12.   Be creative and flexible but **always Christian!**

- Consider reading through various portions of the Bible together
- Start an inspirational book club with your class members
- Have lunch or dinner together
- Use the Bible Study Guide while meeting with an inactive or shut in class member
- Go on prayer walks together
- Join together to visit a sick member of your group
- Go Christmas caroling
- In nice weather head to the park, sporting events, etc.
- Use teleconferencing to have discussions
- Use Facebook or email to share prayers and inspirational thoughts.
- Start a prayer chain

(Training Break-Out Group Exercise)

Class Leaders Are:
CHAMPIONS OF A COVENANT FOR DISCIPLESHIP

In your break-out groups discuss how each of these terms are associated with Class Leaders.

1.   Transforming Disciples:

2.   Christ Centered Teachers and Leaders:

3.   Holds Accountability:

4.   Raises the bar towards excellence:

5.   Is Intentional:

6.   Gets personally involved in development:

7.   Reaches Up, Reaches in, then Reaches Out:

Bethel AMEC Class Leader Training

"Becoming Disciples for Christ"
May 19, 2012

M. Valentine

Why Do We Need Class Leaders?

- To promote an active prayer life among all Bethel members
- To provide mentorship for Bethel's Members
- To provide a safe focus for individual and smaller group development
- To encourage members of the class to be faithful
- To promote growth and development of each person towards Christian Discipleship
- To increase participation in the life of the church
- To notify the pastor of progress of new church members
- To notify the pastor of special needs in your group

M. Valentine

What are the qualifications to Be a Class Leader?

- A Christian of good character who strives to follow Christ
- A full member of Bethel AME Church
- Demonstrates leadership in faithfulness to God and the church
- Willing to serve as a class leader
- Sets aside time to do the work of a class leader
- Maintains good and regular attendance at worship service
- Attends Bible Study and/or Sunday School
- Has a personal commitment to prayer and fasting
- Loves the Lord, the church, and people

M. Valentine

What is the Work of a Class Leader?

- Being a team leader for the members of your class
- Lovingly providing mentorship for members of your class
- Visiting your class members
- Calling your class members
- Arranging times for class meetings
- Collecting tithes and offerings from your class members when they are unable to come for worship
- Encouraging your class members to grow in discipleship

M. Valentine

APPENDIX I

DISTRIBUTION OF BETHEL'S DISCIPLESHIP (JUNE 3, 2012)

Distribution of Bethel's Discipleship (June 3, 2012)

Phase A. Becoming Disciples (Inquiry)			Phase B. Making Disciples (Collaboration)	Phase C. Discipleship (Synergy)
Stage 1. Conversion	Stage 2. Accession	Stage 3. Integration		
Active(6) 1(M) 3(MY) 2(FY)	Active:(49) 29 (F) 6 (F/SI) 13 (M) 1 (M/SI)	Active: 60(F) 12(F Y) 15(M) 10(Male)	1 1	
Inactive: 1(F/Y)	Inactive:(38) 19 (F) 18 (M) 1 (M/Y)			
	Away:(15) 2(F) College 4(M) College 1(M) Military 1(M) Incarcerated 3(F) Moved 4(M) Moved			
Total: 7(3.4%)	Total: 102 (49%)	Total: 97 (46.7%)	Total 2 (1%)	

Legend: F: Female   M: Male   SI: Shut in   Y: Youth <18

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